Aberdeen’s Pride & Joy
MARK TAYLOR

David Taylor recently celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in Aberdeen Synagogue on 10 July 2004. Both David’s grandfathers took the service, something of a tradition in the family as David’s grandfather also took the Bar Mitzvah service of David’s uncle, in Dundee, almost twenty five years ago. David’s grandmother baked her ‘secret recipe’, extremely moreish strudel for the Kiddush, just as she had done twenty five years ago for the Kiddush in Dundee.

David started studying for his Bar Mitzvah in Leicester and completed his studies at the ‘yeshivah’ in Alford, Aberdeenshire. At one point David was so inspired by his Cheder lessons with Rabbi Kantorovitz that he said he wanted to become a Rabbi. This ambition has since faded. David now wants to be the next Frank Lloyd Wright. David was joined by family, friends and members of the local community. Guests travelled from near and far including London, Glasgow, Dundee, Beersheva, Houston and Watford. The gathering of the clans started on the Friday, and celebrations continued through a hectic weekend concluding on Monday. As David says “it was a bit nerve racking but went well”.

Mazal tov!

Welcome...

...to the growing newsletter for the scattered Jews of Scotland. The fringes on the Arba Kanfot seem to be made of elastic – in this issue we welcome London as a suburb of Scotland... and Four Corners wings its way to Shetland, Findhorn, Beersheva (Israel) and Co. Cork (Eire) as well as the length and breadth Scotland.
Thanks to all who gave us valuable feed-back and contributions. If you don’t see what you want in these pages, please submit alternative material! We would be delighted to start an ‘ask the Rabbi’ section for queries of halachic, spiritual, intellectual or community nature, from whatever viewpoint. Our wide range of Rabbinic and other knowledgeable contacts will be called upon for their specialist advice. No question is silly or irrelevant, no job too big or too small for our capable team!

PLEASE SEND COMMENTS & CONTRIBUTIONS TO
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Some useful definitions:

JEWDO: A traditional form of self defense based on talking one’s way out of a tight spot.

CHUTZPAPA: A father who wakes his wife at 4am so she can change the baby’s diaper.

DEJA NU: Having the feeling you’ve seen the same exasperated look on your mother’s face but not knowing exactly when.

DISORIENTA: When Aunt Sadie gets lost in a department store and strikes up a conversation with everyone she passes.
in the 1920s, plans were drawn up by the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation to build a Synagogue in Salisbury Road on the south side of the city. Their aim was to build a structure ‘of an imposing nature, and fit to be ranked among the beautiful houses of worship of the city’. Today all who approach and enter the Synagogue, whether local or visitors, never fail to remark how beautiful a building it is – especially following the extensive refurbishment that took place over the past year.

The Mikveh is a building to the rear of the complex. Unused for a number of years it had fallen into a serious state of disrepair. Although the ritual bath within the Mikveh had been brought back into use a few years ago, the building itself still required renovation. The roof had to be renewed, structural movement in one corner necessitated new internal brickwork and a new steel lintel. However, the timber screens around the ritual bath were retained, stained and varnished and brought back to life.

The year’s activities were brought to an exciting conclusion with the Rededication of the Mikveh by Lady Amelle Jakobovits. Sunday March 28th 2004 was an unforgettable and highly charged afternoon for the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Following the Official Opening, Lady Jakobovits was taken on a tour round the now fully restored building by Bill and Val Simpson who had done so much for the project.

Welcoming Lady Jakobovits to Scotland, John Cosgrove, Chair of SCOJEC spoke of happy memories of previous visits by Lady Jakobovits and her late husband the former Chief Rabbi and stressed the importance of the Mikveh in Jewish life. In a moving and emotional reply, Lady Jakobovits remarked that she was overwhelmed with admiration for the Edinburgh Congregation, and she unveiled a plaque commemorating the event.
Yom Kippur in Argyll

Cente, easy-going davening (prayers) and bring along anything you’d like to share – poems, stories, personal experiences and join in discussion of what Yom Kippur means to you.

And …(very importantly) enjoy a convivial meal at the end of the fast!

Please do come along and join us!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT JOHN AND CHERRY FREEMAN 01631 770243

Glasgow’s Garnethill Synagogue Celebrates Anniversary

Garnethill Synagogue was in the news again in June when more than 300 members and friends from all walks of life and religions gathered in the shul for a special service to celebrate its 125th anniversary.

The synagogue president Gerald Levin welcomed the congregation, and introduced the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, who told the gathering “Garnethill is one of the great names in the architectural and congregational history of British synagogues. As the mother synagogue of Glasgow it set the tone and the pattern for synagogues in the city.

The synagogue’s 7th spiritual leader is Morocco-born Aharon Soudry, a lay reader with a deep knowledge of the ways of Judaism. He is a Bachelor of Science graduate (zoology) of Glasgow University.

Of the ways of Judaism. He is a Bachelor of Science graduate (zoology) of Glasgow University.

and since it opened its doors in 1879 its members have always made an incalculable contribution to the life of Glasgow and the rest of Scotland, in medicine, science, the law, local and national government, diplomacy, scholarship, and the visual and performing arts.

Because of its proximity to Glasgow University its membership has over the years included 10 professors. One member, Myer Galpern, became Lord Provost of the city and later a Member of Parliament, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, and a life peer.

Ernest Greenhill was City Treasurer and later also a life peer, Sir Horace Phillips was British ambassador to Turkey, Benno Soudry was Sculptor in Ordinary to Queen Elizabeth and Dr Jack E Miller was awarded the Gold Medal of the British Medical Association for his work for nine years as the national treasurer.

In 1998 Zvi Avraham, a council member, negotiated with the Israel Antiquities Authority for the loan of the Exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which ran for four months in Glasgow’s flagship Art Gallery and Museum in Kelvingrove and was the most financially successful temporary exhibition ever held in the city.

Garnethill has had 7 ministers in its 12 decades. First the Rev. E. P Phillips, who served for half a century. The synagogue’s 7th spiritual leader is Morocco-born Aharon Soudry, a lay reader with a deep knowledge of the ways of Judaism. He is a Bachelor of Science graduate in biology of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he met his wife Rosalie, a science graduate (zoology) of Glasgow University.

In an age when it is possible to send probes to Mars it is interesting to reflect that when Garnethill was opened in Hill Street, Queen Victoria still had two more decades to reign, the telephone and the gramaphone were still grating infants, Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece Eugene Onegin was given its first performance in Moscow, and Mr McTear of St. Rollox Chemical Works, Glasgow, claimed to have made artificial diamonds.
Equality, Human Rights and Alphabet Soup!

The government in Westminster proposes to set up a new organisation to oversee issues of equality and human rights. The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) will incorporate the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) and will have responsibility for the additional areas covered by new equality legislation - Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation and Age, as well as for Human Rights.

As you can see – and were no doubt already aware - government initiatives have a habit of generating vast quantities of acronyms incomprehensible to anyone not in the know, and this one is no exception.

SCoJeC (to throw in an acronym of our own) is in the know about this particular initiative, being represented on both the SEHRRG and the SE&HRC.

And what, you may not unreasonably ask, are they?

In translation the SEHRRG becomes the Scottish Equalities and Human Rights Reference Group - which probably doesn’t make things that much clearer. It's been set up by the Scottish Executive with representatives from each of the six equality 'strands' (government speak for race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age) as well as from business, the public sector, the trades unions, Scottish government and the like. Its job has been to provide a wide Scottish perspective for the TF (Task Force) in London who have been advising the WP (White Paper) drafting team at the dti (Department of Trade and Industry – and ALWAYS lower case!) who have actually written the CEHR proposal.

The SE&HRC (Scottish Equalities and Human Rights Coalition) has been set up by SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Services) and provides a forum for voluntary sector organisations such as the Scottish Human Rights Centre (SHRC), National Children's Homes (NCH) and Oxfam (best known by its acronym, but actually Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) to come together with representatives of the equality 'strands' to discuss ‘best practice’ and ways of ‘mainstreaming equality’ (plain Scottish: stopping and preventing discrimination).

Alphabet soup aside, there is an important issue here. There are potentially very big advantages to having a single commission, particularly for those groups covered by the new equality legislation – and that includes us. The three existing equality commissions have built up a large body of expertise which hasn't yet been developed around the new 'strands', and their skills and experience will be more easily shared within a single organisation. It's not all good news though - this is a huge undertaking and there is a lot of concern that some aspects of the government’s proposal have not been well thought-out.

As a GB-wide organisation, albeit with a Scottish committee, the CEHR will not have the resources or staffing to put the equality agenda into practice at grassroots level. Its role will be in promoting best practice, advising Ministers and organisations, and undertaking a limited amount of casework. The voluntary sector will play a significant role in turning equality theory and policy into practice, in building an evidence base of good and bad practice, in assessing the effectiveness of existing legislation, in assessing ways of implementing existing legislation effectively and in stimulating and influencing political debate.

As a result of its involvement in the SEHRRG and SE&HRC, SCoJeC (sorry! see above!) has input into the Task Force - and thus into Government thinking about the CEHR - and also has input into the way in which the equality agenda is being taken forward at grassroots level in Scotland. Input into policy-making and also into making things happen on the ground.

The Equalities and Human Rights agendas have lots of implications for the Jewish community in Scotland, and SCoJeC is committed to ensuring that the concerns of the Jewish community are heard and taken into consideration at all levels.

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**Kosher in the Wild West**

**JACQUELINE SPEYER**

The Glasgow Jewish Telegraph recently carried a photo of McCaigs Tower, Oban and an article by a tourist on his experience regarding Jewish dietary requirements in Argyll. In brief, he had a difficulty obtaining frridge-space in the hotel in which he was staying. An off-the-cuff story that he was a Rabbi on an interfaith mission did the trick and he seemed to enjoy his stay. The following letter has been submitted for publication:

I was amused to read Joseph Mintz report on his ‘Highland Fling with Kosher Food.’ His way around the Kashrut problem inevitable in Oban was inventive, but not all of us would pass as a Rabbi... Having lived in Argyll for 19 years, I would like to add a few comments to assure potential tourists they don't necessarily have to use this technique:

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**Succah Party 2004**

We are planning a Succot event – an opportunity for people from as many corners of Scotland as possible to get together, eat, talk and generally have a good time. Date: Sunday 3rd October, Time and Venue yet to be arranged – but if you live somewhere it's easy to get to from north south east and west, have a big enough garden (best known by its acronym, but actually Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) to come together with representatives of the equality 'strands' to discuss 'best practice' and ways of 'mainstreaming equality' (plain Scottish: stopping and preventing discrimination).

**PLEASE CONTACT LEAH GRANAT:**

**MOBILE 07887 488 100 OR EMAIL: LEAH.GRANAT@ONETEL.NET**

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**Kosher Food.**' His way around the Kashrut problem inevitable in Oban was inventive, but not all of us would pass as a Rabbi... Having lived in Argyll for 19 years, I would like to add a few comments to assure potential tourists they don't necessarily have to use this technique:

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a) It is unreasonable expect locals - anywhere - to be aware of Jewish food requirements, but generally West Highlanders have a high standard of hospitality, and are gentle accepting folk. In 19 years, the most unfriendly reply I received when I said I was “Jewish” was that it must be better than being English! Any curiosity thereafter was genuine, unbiased and nicely tempered with Highland reserve. My difference was respected and not challenged.

b) Travelling with all your food is unnecessary if you are reasonably independent and don’t mind being vegetarian when your salami from the city runs out. When I started keeping Kosher I was amazed how little my diet changed. The only things I bought from Glasgow were meat, cheese and wine. I was helped enormously by the excellent London Beth-Din book ‘the really Jewish food guide’ which lists standard products available in any supermarket.

c) Jewish tourists to the West Highlands may also wish to know that there is a scattered community group – the Jewish Network of Highlands and Argyll, and a quarterly newsletter "Four Corners" which spans the whole of rural Scotland. Both can be contacted through the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities.
The Essence of the High Holy Days

_ADAPTED FROM JNF ALMANAC_

**Rosh Hashanah** (New Year) is a period of personal judgment, and we are also commanded to rejoice... The knowledge that God is merciful and will enable us to receive a favorable verdict relieves any harsh feelings, which might accompany such a time. It is ‘the birthday of the world’ and a chance for a clean slate for us all. It is followed by the ‘ten days of repentance’, the Fast of Gedaliah and Shabbat Shuvah (Return) - so called from the customary reading of Hosea (14:2) “Return ('Shuvah') O Israel, to the Lord, your God, for you have fallen by your iniquity.” Also called Shabbat Teshuvah (‘the Sabbath of Repentance’) which is the same word – when we repent, we return.

**Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) is a day of joy mixed with solemnity and awe, it is the day on which our verdict is sealed. It is a day with many abstentions. One is forbidden to eat, drink, wash, rub cream into the skin, wear normal leather shoes, and have marital relations. Yom Kippur atones for sins against God, but sins against fellow humans cannot be atoned for until the injured party has agreed to forget the wrong doing. On this day we examine our interpersonal relationships. The sound of the shofar (trumpet made from a ram’s horn) we began before Rosh Hashana closes the day.

A week later **Succot** “the festival of our Rejoicing” begins it is also known as the “Festival of Ingathering” of crops. The Sukkah (a temporary booth used for eating and sleeping for the 8 days of the festival) stresses that all material possessions are transitory and that acquiring them is not a value in itself. The only possessions that we can acquire for all eternity are the commandments we fulfill and the spiritual content we impart to our lives.

**Hoshana Rabbah** the last day of Succot, is also believed to be the final day of the “Days of Awe” – the last chance before the verdict for the year to come. Thus Hoshana Rabbah is a mixture of the joy of Succot with the seriousness of the Days of Awe.

Then **Shemini Atzeret** is a festival in its own right, symbolizing God’s love for Israel. After the Jews have been in Jerusalem for seven days in their temporary abodes God says: “Please stay with Me for another day, for I find it hard to part from you”. We finish the yearly cycle of reading the Torah now, and a feast is made just as when one completes studying a tractate of the Talmud. This is **Simchat Torah**, ‘rejoicing of the Torah’.

When we want to solder a piece of silver to a silver vessel the edge of the piece must be cleaned so that no foreign substance may intervene. Likewise when a person wishes to cleave to God he must purify himself of every foreign thought beforehand.

_**Spiritual Accounting System**_  
_ADAPTED FROM RABBI NOAH WEINBURG, AISH WEBSITE_

To be successful in business, you need a good accountant. The same principle applies in the game of life.

If you ask someone: Are you eating to live, or living to eat? Of course they’ll tell you they’re eating to live. Now ask What are you living for? They won’t always have a good answer, but at least you made them think about what they’re doing in life. Unfortunately the majority of us are very busy doing and accomplishing, but we don’t know for what.

Everyone has instances in life where something wakes us up and we’re confronted by the question: “What has my life been all about up till now?” Momentarily we may be scared, and we may try to escape by turning on the TV or grabbing a newspaper.

A man I know was accidentally shot, and as a result became a paraplegic. While lying in the hospital, he was faced with this question: “What is life all about? What am I living for?” Today he will tell you that God did him a great favor by paralyzing him; otherwise he may have gone through his entire life without ever asking this fundamental and crucial question.

Some day we may be told we only have six months to live, but then it may be too late to consider the question. So we might as well start asking ourselves now.

God has told us what we’re here for, and what we really want in life is to love Him. What we have to do is get in touch with this desire of our souls and then plan how to attain that love. We say this in the Shema twice daily (and it’s written in the mezuzah): ‘To know that God is One, and to love Him with everything we have.’ If this is what we really want, then we should ask, ‘What am I doing to attain it?’

This is the process a Jew goes through on Rosh Hashana: The most powerful tool against wasting your life is Cheshbon Hanefesh — Spiritual Accounting. We need a regular system to evaluate how well we performed, and take stock of where we stand.

On Rosh Hashana, we make a cheshbon covering the previous year. Figure out what we did right and what we did wrong — and then make a plan to correct those mistakes. We have to take responsibility for our lives because no one else will do it for us. We are all created in God’s image and have the potential for greatness.

In “The Path of the Just,” Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato says: “The foundation of good action and the root of true service of God is for a person to know his goal in this world.” This is our motto in Judaism. If a person has clarity on where he’s going, he’ll get there. Otherwise he’ll just remain in a state of confusion all his life. This is the common denominator of “free will” available to every human being.

The shofar blasts like an alarm clock. We can either wake up and ask the right questions, or sleep our lives away. The Almighty wants us to wake up and live.

_**Calendar of events**_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Hebrew date</th>
<th>Scottish Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosh Hashana</td>
<td>1-2 Tishri</td>
<td>16-17 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shabbat Tshuva</td>
<td>3 Tishri</td>
<td>18 September</td>
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<td>Fast of Gedaliah</td>
<td>4 Tishri</td>
<td>19 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
<td>10 Tishri</td>
<td>25 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Succot</td>
<td>15-21 Tishri</td>
<td>30 Sept-6 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoshana Rabbah</td>
<td>21 Tishri</td>
<td>6 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shemini Atzeret</td>
<td>22 Tishri</td>
<td>7 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simchat Torah</td>
<td>23 Tishri</td>
<td>8 October</td>
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_**THE MONTH OF TISHRI & the Days of Awe**_
Life has taken on a Scottish flavour lately...

On the first Shabbat of each month, I attend Friday evening service at the Liberal shul and enjoy a convivial chavurah supper with a guest and a talk or a shiur if a High or Low Holy day.

This Friday evening the guests was, of all people, the Anglican chaplain to Dundee University! The minister had met the Liberal Rabbi at a prior interfaith meeting. I was able to interview him briefly and learned that Dundee University is twinned with Nablus and there is a strong anti-Israel pro-Palestine sentiment on campus. There is a Jewish chaplain and the Jewish students form a close-knit group. Apparently there are not many Jewish people in Dundee. How do you feel about this Dundee? Let’s hear from you.

The second unusually Scottish element came on my annual holiday taka Respite Break – it’s pure indulgence as really – och never mind. I’ve left the puir wee soul in the hands of carers in Kings Lynn. Erev Shabbat was moving, relaxing and humorously light-hearted. I went to John and Jeanette and their daughter, a lovely lady hailing from Lynn, and along with her I found a church. When relieved I was offered a cup of tea, apparent native custom post-service. Friendly lot – and I heard there were visitors from Scotland. Curious I asked the lady in question: she only came from Lochgillhead, where the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands originated 10 years ago, and she works as a MS volunteer in the Arms Centre where we used to meet, and knows one of our ‘founder members.’ I explained to her how I kenned the place and when I left the church I felt so homesick and sad remembering the wonderful close times we had up there and all the happiness. I felt very alone.

Ties between the Corners

It is a cold winter’s afternoon in Aberdeen. A hint of snow is in the air. Around 5.00pm a train pulls into the station and a strange man with a beard and kippah disembarks. He is met by a distinguished looking gentleman who bundles him into a car and whisk him off to an address on Dee St where people are already eagerly awaiting his arrival. After an hour or so he is taken back to the station and embarks on the 7.25 train to Edinburgh.

This monthly scenario is not something out of a spy novel but rather a somewhat dramatised version of my monthly trips of to the small but active community in Aberdeen. About 10 to 15 people normally attend these monthly shiurim (informal lectures) and though it may be cold outside the atmosphere inside is warm and welcoming. I normally come bearing a fresh loaf of bread and salmon, humous and other delicacies are laid out for supper. After chatting for a while we normally have an hour long shiur on a topical subject; interspersed with lively questions. People are enthusiastic and interested to learn more and I, for one, greatly enjoy visiting this small but warm and welcoming community.

We in Edinburgh greatly enjoy welcoming visitors from Aberdeen for Shabbat and we hope to, together with the Aberdeen community, plan a Shabbat in Aberdeen in the coming year. I also send a weekly parasha sheet to Aberdeen with northern Shabbat times all year round. We both gain a lot from our association with each other and may it go from strength to strength.

The Community can take no small satisfaction that J Fest 2004 was an unquestionably tremendous success. We, as a community, excelled ourselves. Without a doubt we showed that while the community may be getting smaller it is certainly no less active. With 42 events crammed into a ten day period the community should, as the Jewish Telegraph said, “be extremely proud of itself”.

FROM THE London Corner

It (was) All Going On

J Fest 2004 was a celebration of the Glasgow Jewish Community - a positive and vibrant community feeling, an opportunity to show the strength of a community working together and to showcase a host of activities covering all age groups and types of organisation. J Fest 2004 was intended to create a celebration of the Glasgow Jewish Community - a positive and vibrant community feeling, an opportunity to show the strength of a community working together and to showcase a host of activities covering all age groups and types of organisation.

The first Community Week was held in 1994 in response to a challenge from the Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks. During his first pastoral visit to Scotland he had urged the community to show that it cared about its future and to undertake a programme of renewal. The Representative Council at that time took up the challenge and coordinated a very successful week of communal events.

This time too we aimed to open the doors to all the richly varied elements that go to making up our community. As one of the advertisements put it, “ten days of events for the entire community - A ball, a book launch, a card brunch, coffee mornings, discos, a fashion show, musical entertainments, a Moral Maze, open days, Purim events, Question Time, self defence, shul suppers, speakers - a gantze Megillah! Watch this space!”

And the Community did take heed and did watch the space. Participation was at record levels and people were seen at many events clutching their programmes and asking each other “What are you going to next?” There were films, an arts and crafts fair, shul suppers, the Brownie and Guide 60th Anniversary, self defence classes, a celebration of Jewish music from Solomon to Swing”, authors, speakers, “Melody and Mirth” (entertainment for all), and a question panel. It was of particular satisfaction that Edinburgh participated, holding a communal supper at which they were joined by a bus-full of people from Glasgow.

The second unusually Scottish element came on my annual holiday taka Respite Break – it’s pure indulgence as really – och never mind. I’ve left the puir wee soul in the hands of carers in Kings Lynn. Erev Shabbat was moving, relaxing and humorously light-hearted. I went to John and Jeanette and their daughter, a lovely lady hailing from Lynn, and along with her I found a church. When relieved I was offered a cup of tea, apparent native custom post-service. Friendly lot – and I heard there were visitors from Scotland. Curious I asked the lady in question: she only came from Lochgillhead, where the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands originated 10 years ago, and she works as a MS volunteer in the Arms Centre where we used to meet, and knows one of our ‘founder members.’ I explained to her how I kenned the place and when I left the church I felt so homesick and sad remembering the wonderful close times we had up there and all the happiness. I felt very alone.