

Aberdeen Shul's 60th Birthday

June 6th 2005 marked the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the consecration of Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation's synagogue, a place described by the Jewish Chronicle as the most northerly location of Jewish worship in the British Isles.

Although the current synagogue was consecrated sixty years ago, there has been a small but vibrant community in Aberdeen since the last quarter of the nineteenth century and Jews have been visiting Aberdeen since even earlier. The first record of any Jews arriving was during the reign of James VI but they didn't stay as they felt that they couldn't make a living there.

The occasion was marked by an illustrated talk entitled 'The Jews of Aberdeen and the Dee Street Shul' at the synagogue. The talk is only part of my wider research into the smaller Jewish communities of Scotland, recounted the first recordings of any Jews in Aberdeen through to the establishment of the congregation in 1893 until the present. The talk was well attended by members of the community, the university and other institutions in the Grampian region. During a discussion prompted by my talk, Stuart MacKenzie, a history postgraduate at the University of Aberdeen, suggested the reason for Scotland's appeal for Jews was that when it came to prejudice, Jews were "way down the line".

Afterwards refreshments were served, including a birthday cake modelled after the shul's interior, baked by Daniel Shoshan. Yonni Shoshan, Treasurer of the Congregation, echoed the feelings of the community and all those who attended, when he said that it had been a "very stimulating and entertaining" celebration "befitting the shul's birthday".



The talk capped a busy week for our community. During the previous week Rabbi David Rose made his regular visit from Edinburgh to hold his monthly shiur. Rabbi Rose spoke about the Second Temple period and other matters. His shiur was preceded by a session for children, aged 8-12. On Friday night, the congregation held its weekly Shabbat service, followed by a communal meal in the hall upstairs. Aberdeen's Jewish community is looking forward to its next sixty years.

If anyone would like to contribute any information to my study on Scotland's small Jewish communities, namely Aberdeen, Argyll and Bute, Ayr, Dundee, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Greenock and Inverness, I'd be delighted to hear from them.

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Welcome, there's food for thought, information and humour in our 7th issue: learning opportunities, social, spiritual and political comment and much more. Thank you to everyone who has written articles – especially to those who didn't wait to be asked! This is your newsletter, you can make it what you want, so please keep them coming.

It was good to see those who were able to come to Dundee in September, and I hope that many will be able to come to our events during the next year. For those who like to combine being sociable with business and want to know how SCOJeC operates, the AGM is coming up – we'll let you know the date and venue shortly.

As you'll see on page 3, we're pleased to have developed our links with BEMIS – Ephraim Borowski, whom you know as Director of SCOJeC is also Vice-Convenor of BEMIS, and the two organisations will be working together in two new projects during the coming year.

Wishing you all a Shanah Tovah!

Reports of Recent Events Inside



SEE INSERT PP. 7-8:
Chief Rabbi Visits Scottish Parliament
(photo left: Leah Granat, SCOJeC; Jack McConnell, First Minister; Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi; Ephraim Borowski, SCOJeC) and Event Day in Dundee (photo right)



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FOUR CORNERS IS AVAILABLE ON THE WEB
www.j-scot.org.uk

THE 5TH CORNER

Scots in London? Can't move for them. Jews in London? Hardly a rarity. Scottish Jews in London? Not so many at all.

Down here, I'm probably the only Scottish Jew that most of my friends have ever come across. I rarely wear either a kilt or a kippa, and certainly haven't worn both at the same time, but people still often seem a little bit baffled by my dual minority status.

In London, of course, minority status is worn as a badge of pride. I've met two or three people - in my decade here - who are pure, boring unsullied Christian English. They tend to be a little embarrassed about it, forever dredging up Irish great aunts or Spanish third cousins to spice up the mix. One girl I know even pretends to be French, but her accent slips back to Devon when she gets drunk. Almost nobody in London is from London. I think that's what allows this rare Scottish Jew to feel so at home.

The melting pot's melting pot, of course, is down on the tube. Behind that well-polished front of hardened indifference, people have started noticing minorities down there. Ever since the July bombings, you can see it in the way that eyes flicker. I daresay it's more pleasant to wander onto the Northern Line with a rucksack as a Scottish Jew in a kippa and a kilt than it is as a Muslim Bangladeshi in a kaftan. Perversely, I'd imagine that North London Hassidim are getting their fair share of glares, too, whenever they venture south of Archway.

It's probably the Scot in me, but I do feel uneasy when my fellow minority groups separate themselves off in their own enclaves, whether it's Brick Lane's Muslims, Brixton's Caribbeans or Golders Green's Jews. I'm all for religious integrity, but culturally, it would be nice to see people getting to know their neighbours. It seems to be letting the melting pot down, otherwise. Then again, I think of my Great-Grandfather's generation in Edinburgh, all bundled together in a small chunk of streets by the Meadows, with butchers and bakers all of their own, and I wonder what their neighbours made of them. Perhaps this is just how groups find their feet. Perhaps, in another generation, we'll get Caribbean Hassidim walking through Brick Lane in kaftans. Pretending to be French.

HUGO RIFKIND

HUGO WAS BROUGHT UP IN EDINBURGH AND WRITES REGULAR COLUMNS FOR THE HERALD AND THE (LONDON) TIMES

Holidaying on the South Coast

JUDITH LIPMAN

Well is that no' just the way. There's me, a right slitter, wi' clarty feet, no very fresh after lying on the beach for 4 hours and I find myself meeting new folk.

The excursion for the day was the Isle of Wight. I was on holiday based at Littlehampton, and due to observe a yahrzeit for my grandfather. So I found the phone number of Bognor kehillah (Jewish community) from the Jewish Chronicle and, after staggering off the beach, decided to ring and make arrangements for Friday evening or Saturday. After a wee blether she said casually, "pity you can't make this evening as at 8pm Rev Malcolm Weisman is coming to talk to us". The puir soul was near deafened by my yell. I never got back to the beach as planned but took off back to mainland. Here's my report!

There is only one Jewish family living in Bognor Regis but there are others around. The core membership is 13, but there's a mailing list of 40 for their monthly newsletter. There is a settled Jewish population between Lewes-Brighton-Eastbourne but from Brighton to Portsmouth there are a lot of holiday homes and people only visit for part of the year and attend Portsmouth synagogue.

However on High Holy Days ingenious arrangements are made for services. Chairs are schlepped from upstairs, pictures removed from the walls and a converted TV cabinet is hung up as an ark. This is a household with its own Sefer Torah, and a shofar for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. 3-4 times a year people from the Worthing and Southampton Jewish communities come to Bognor Regis for Friday evening services and socials.

David Katanka is the Rabbi of Portsmouth synagogue which, although officially Orthodox, encompasses Jews who are Reform/Liberal, of any persuasion and by any definition, and Jews with non-Jewish partners. A recent generous bequest has helped Portsmouth to refurbish and make essential repairs and alterations. There used to be 230 members but this number is dwindling. One member is living in Arundel Castle, in Lady Lavinia's apartments, and only recently rediscovered their Jewish faith!

To return to this evening, 10 or 11 people gathered and adjourned to the garden to sit under the gazebo. Rev M Weisman gave a very interesting but light talk. Initially he talked about his work, official government places and decentralisation of offices due to financial constraints. Mention of topical events included the importance of developing good relationships with the Muslim community without bending over backwards or alienating the majority of non-believers in the UK. Then he talked on Jewish humour dividing it into three broad categories; scholarly reasoned logical humour, humour about shlemiels/schlemozzles (what's the difference between a schlemiel and a schlemozzle? A schlemiel is someone who spills something on the schlemozzle) and folk humour - themes repeated world-wide.

Over tea and biscuits I found out a little more about some of the people - one member's family came to England in 1704 (wow!) and another, the gentleman who drove me back to Littlehampton, was evacuated to Cambridge during World War 2 and afterwards became a fruit farmer there before retiring to a small village near Bognor Regis. This was a truly pleasant interesting meeting and although I couldn't get to Portsmouth Saturday someone promised to say the Kaddish for my grandfather.

What can AJR do for you?

MICHAEL NEWMAN

It is not every day that you will read about an organisation, whose

membership has an average age of 82, on a recruitment drive but at the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) we are actively seeking to reach out to new members and offer them the extensive services we already provide to 3,500 members nationwide.

Founded in 1941 by Jewish refugees from central Europe, the AJR has accumulated more than 60 years' experience attending to the needs of Holocaust refugees and survivors. Today, membership is extended to all Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and their families and the AJR counts as its members, former refugees from all Nazi-occupied countries.

In addition to our team of dedicated social care workers, who attend to the day-to-day needs of our members, our highly developed Outreach Programme enables our members with similar backgrounds a unique opportunity to meet and share their experiences. We already operate 32 groups throughout the country including gatherings in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

The AJR also organises weeklong group holidays for members in different areas of the country, the AJR's Central Office for Holocaust Claims provides advice and assistance on restitution and compensation and we look after the interests of the Kindertransport.

**Interested? Find out more at
www.ajr.org.uk Tel: 020 8385 3070**



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Jewish Interactive Studies (JIS) offers free online courses for adults at all levels of Jewish education. Since 1998, over 3,200 people have furthered their Jewish education in seventeen online courses that feature:

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A Black & White Issue?

SCoJeC recently responded to consultations held by the Scottish Executive and the General Register Office for Scotland about questions to be included in the 2011 census. The 2001 census was the first to include questions on religion and ethnicity, and the responses to these have provided some interesting information about the make-up of the Scottish community. However, there has been widespread criticism of the way in which the questions were worded, and it is generally agreed that this affected the accuracy and reliability of some of the information collected so the authorities are keen to get it right next time.

The 'ethnicity' question in the 2001 Scottish census referred to 'cultural background', and grouped the possible responses in order as (A) White, (B) Mixed, (C) Asian, (D) Black, and (E) other. The latter gave rise to several serious objections: the confusion of ethnicity and culture in the question; the mix of geography, colour, and nationality in the answers; the echo of Apartheid in the order of the headings; the irrationality of the two-tier classification; and so on. Protests from the African community in particular led to the Race Equality Advisory Forum taking the Registry to task and obtaining agreement that the statistics would be published using a single-level classification and avoiding objectionable terminology.

The Jewish Community clearly has a particular interest in two questions: religion and ethnicity. There is no single factor identifiable as 'ethnicity' - which is precisely what the failings of the 2001 question demonstrated. Instead there are a variety of factors that contribute to an individual's sense of 'identity', including the respondent's nationality, descent, race, religion, culture, and language, among others, and all of these must be taken into consideration if the census is to provide useful information in this complex and often sensitive area.

It is clear from the 2001 census that more people regard themselves as being of any particular religion than attend a place of worship. This is particularly true of Jewish people, many of whom consider themselves ethnically Jewish despite the fact that they do not affiliate to a synagogue.

There is also empirical evidence of this from the last Canadian census, in which respondents were able to identify themselves as 'Jewish' in response to both the religion and the ethnicity questions. The data showed that the number identifying in either of these ways was 27.6% more than those identifying themselves Jewish by religion alone. It is obviously to our advantage to make sure as many people as possible are counted.

The Jewish community can gather information itself through synagogue membership figures but this inevitably misses people who are less religiously committed or who do not have a synagogue nearby. Many Jewish people in Scotland live in very small communities or else away from any community at all and only a universal survey such as the census can ensure that they are included.

We hope to be able to put new consultation papers and responses onto the website soon, but in the meantime contact Leah if you'd like to know more.

Leah Granat, tel: 07887 488 100
j-scot@j-scot.org



A NEW VENTURE: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

You may remember that Rami Ousta, Director of BEMIS (Black and Minority Ethnic Infrastructure in Scotland) was the guest speaker at SCoJeC's AGM in September 2004. Well, since then there have been some exciting developments, and we have agreed to work in partnership on a couple of projects that will benefit both organisations, and, more importantly, the communities we each serve.

Project no. 1 is a weekly digest of information prepared by SCoJeC and circulated to a wide range of organisations. It's planned to also post it on both the BEMIS and SCoJeC websites (www.bemis.org.uk / www.j-scot.org.uk) There is so much news, so much is going on, that it can sometimes be difficult to keep track of issues affecting the ethnic minority voluntary sector. Statements and initiatives from the Scottish Executive, motions put forward by MSPs in the Scottish Parliament, UK-wide policy and legislation proposed at Westminster, inquiries undertaken by the CRE, initiatives from SCVO etc etc sometimes get lost in the sheer volume of information arriving by post and e-mail, quietly appearing on websites or being splashed in the media. But no more! The digest, which includes weblinks to make it easier to follow-up interesting items, brings together relevant information in one place.

Project no. 2 follows on from the questionnaire in this and the last issue of Four Corners. (Please do fill it in and return it to Leah if you haven't already done so!) It's all very well setting up an organisation, electing a Management Team, and talking to policy-makers, but how do we ensure that what we're saying reflects the experience of real people living in the smaller Scottish Jewish communities or outwith any Jewish community at all? The only way is to ask (hence the questionnaire!) Over the next year we will be holding several meetings and events, aided by funding from BEMIS, where we hope to meet you to find out more about your experiences, both negative and positive, and discuss the issues that are important to you so that we can reflect your views when we speak to people at the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Executive and elsewhere.

Please come to the meetings if you can, return the completed questionnaire, and do get in touch with Leah (contact details wherever they are) if there is anything you think we ought to know about.

JEWISH COALITION ON THE Make Poverty History Demonstration

The weekend of the Make Poverty History demonstration was doubly special for Edinburgh's two Jewish congregations, when around one hundred people involved with the Make Poverty History Jewish Coalition (MPHJC) joined together. Visitors were met with an enthusiastic welcome from both Orthodox and Liberal congregations and were offered accommodation in the homes of community members. Separate Shabbat services were held on Friday night and Saturday morning but both were timed so that everyone could make Kiddush and eat together afterwards at the Synagogue of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. The Liberal services were led by a coalition of visiting Rabbis – Julia Neuberger, James Baaden, Janet Burden and Nancy Morris. Rabbi Baaden brought with him a colourful banner made by the Cheder of South London Synagogue with "love from London" written at the bottom. The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Rabbi David Rose led the orthodox service. Every effort was made to accommodate all variations of observance of Shabbat. Kosher food was provided at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Shul and arrangements were made for water to be provided at a church on the route of the march for those who preferred not to carry water with them. It was accepted that the Liberal congregation wished to carry a banner.

At 2pm approximately fifty Jews, many wearing "Make Poverty History" kippot, assembled on The Meadows in the baking hot sunshine. Due to the sheer volume of people taking part – 225,000 was the final count - it was over two hours later when the group finally began to march through the city. Despite the grueling delay, the experience was enjoyed by all. There was also Jewish representation in the all day programme of events taking place on The Meadows. Rabbi Julia Neuberger addressed the huge crowd from the main stage, panel discussions including Danny Casson, Director of World Jewish Aid and chair of the Make Poverty History Jewish Coalition, and Steve Miller of Tzedek also took place. A crowd of several hundred people were entertained by Clive Lawton of Tzedek and Limmud who told stories and led uplifting Shabbat singing. Lawton created a special interfaith moment by urging the Jews present to introduce themselves to non-Jews.

Hilary Rifkind, Events Convener of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, whose hard work organising catering was appreciated by all, said "People were on a real high, working together as one community with one aim in mind. We loved having everyone here, the atmosphere was wonderful." Danny Casson added "In the five years I've been involved in social action in the Jewish Community, it's the first time there's been such a sustained mass mobilisation of Jews on a social action issue on this scale. It's a great start we can build on."

STEPHANIE BRICKMAN



SCOTLAND DAY LIMMUD

'Windows of Opportunity'

AT HUTCHESONS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL IN POLLOKSHIELDS, GLASGOW ON SUNDAY NOVEMBER 6TH 2005

Do you like meeting new people and trying new things? Do you like to participate in debates, contribute to panel discussions, listen to lectures, take part in workshops, watch a film, learn through text study, dance, sing or just 'hang out'? All this can be yours if you enter into the spirit of Limmud!

Limmud offers a unique blend of formal and informal education for you to explore, drawing on resources from all sections of the community. A broad choice of subjects is on offer in programmes designed for all ages. This year about 45 sessions, lasting an hour each, will be running throughout the day, with 6 or 7 sessions running concurrently at any given time. Topics will cover areas such as Jewish History, Identity, Literature & the Arts, Contemporary Issues and Text Study. The opportunities to recharge your Jewish batteries are endless.

Application forms are now available. If you have never been to a Limmud Day before and want to find out more, please look at <http://www.limmud.org> where you can learn about the wider Limmud organisation and see details of the Scotland Day Limmud which was held in 2003. Information on this year's Day Limmud will be updated regularly: presenters and sessions will appear as they are confirmed and the whole programme will be available in advance of the 6 November event. Application forms will be available online for printing out.

The cost of the ticket represents great value for money (particularly if you take advantage of the 'Early Bird' booking) – the Kosher lunch and all-day refreshments are included along with all the culture! There will be a free crèche for babies and toddlers, free entry to accompanied children aged 16 and under and free transport is on offer from pick-up points in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Limmud Scotland has a modest budget to subsidise the travel costs of participants living in Scotland but not based in Glasgow or Edinburgh. If you'd like to take advantage of this, contact us at the email address below.

Please contact us on 0141 577 6729 or at scotlandday@limmud.org to request an application form or more information.

Limmud Scotland looks forward to welcoming you!



Not a Book Review....

KATHY HAGLER

I don't speak Yiddish, and am ashamed to admit that I never even heard about it until I was quite grown up. When I discovered its existence I was astonished to find that I actually understood some of it; so many words are similar to Hebrew or German, both of which I do speak.

But I never paid much attention to it; either to the language itself or to the traditions embroiled with it.

Until recently, that is.

Two or three years ago a gentile friend lent me a book. I didn't ask for it, I never heard about it, he simply put it in my hands and said he thought I would enjoy it. So I said thank you, took it home and started to read it.

The book's title is "The Joys of Yiddish" by Leo Rosten, published by Penguin Books 30 years ago but reprinted several times since. The ISBN number is 0-14-003068-9.

If you think that I am giving you all these details because I want you to try and find it and buy it, you are absolutely right. I am really trying to talk you into it, and that's not because the Jewish content or because I think you should begin to learn Yiddish, or because I think you should appreciate some old and forgotten Jewish traditions, though all those are true and relevant.

I think you should read it because it is arguably the funniest and, at the same time, most touching book I have ever read, and I am a serious bookworm.

It is a long time since that friend has lent it to me, but I still have it now. I haven't forgotten to return it, he hasn't forgotten about it either, I just keep asking him if I could keep it a while longer. I have read it three times, and I still keep it beside my bed to dip into.

Even the title page is remarkable: "The Joys of Yiddish" is depicted in blue, with the exception of the two letters O and Y in the word Joys, which are red, giving you the exclamation "OY" - a foretaste of what is to follow.

The back cover says that this is a book of "Language and Linguistics", which it is, but it also says it is "Humour", and is not mistaken.

"The Joys of Yiddish" is not a dictionary of Yiddish or a text-book of Yiddish and has not been written to teach you Yiddish. It is more about how Yiddish has influenced (mostly American) English, how it has been influenced by English in its turn, and how it reflects, even today, the variety and vitality of Jewish life, subtleties of feelings and our special culture.

The entries are full of sentiment and sarcasm, paradox and insight. The selected words come in alphabetical order (what else), with an explanation and some illustrations, in the form of stories, anecdotes and jokes.

You don't have to be a Yiddish-speaker to understand the book, nor do you have to be Jewish to enjoy it. But if you are both, especially the latter, you simply must read it. I promise that you'll laugh until you cry, and in the process you'll learn about your ancestors, where you come from, and how that most resourceful of languages deals with the injustices of life.

As the author puts it: "I think it a tongue that never takes its tongue out of its cheek."

I'll just give one example, selected at random, illustrative of the word "shadchen", to whet your appetite:

The shadchen was impressing the young man with the boundless virtues of a female, and ended: 'And to look at, she is a regular picture!'

The young man could not wait for his blind date.

But when he accosted the shadchen the next day, his voice was frosty: 'Her eyes are cross, her nose is crooked, and when she smiles one side of her mouth goes down-'

'Just a minute,' interrupted the shadchen. 'Is it my fault you don't like Picasso?'



יד ושם

Yad Vashem

Earlier this year we commemorated the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps; and we are only too well aware that every year there are fewer survivors still able to pass on their testimony.

It was in order to remember the victims that **Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial** in Jerusalem, set up a database 50 years ago, to gather the names and to preserve the legacy of each individual Jew who died at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. This database is now available online at www.yadvashem.org and can be searched for names, photographs and brief histories, of over three million Holocaust victims murdered for being Jewish.

Testimonies and names given to organisations other than Yad Vashem are probably not in the Central Database and there are many more victims still unidentified. Yad Vashem is asking anyone who has information on people who are not listed in the Database to urgently register them.

Names can be registered in two ways:

1. Online via the website or using forms available from Yad Vashem UK Foundation:

e-mail: office@yadvashem.org.uk
or telephone: 0207 543 402

2. Using a special form for registering Holocaust victims known as a Page of Testimony. Forms and instructions can be downloaded from:

http://www1.yadvashem.org/download/index_download.html

THANK YOU
to those who returned the
questionnaire
in the last issue.

**For those who never got
around to it and have lost it,
there's another copy in this issue!**

**WE REALLY DO WANT TO
HEAR WHAT YOU
HAVE TO SAY!**

Arranging a burial plot in the Highlands

VALERIE HOUSE

Did you realise you can be buried in a 'Jewish plot' in your local cemetery even in remote areas of Scotland? A few months ago I asked at our local service point about burial in Gairloch and within a short space of time we had a very positive response from the Highland Council. I had a phone call from a young man (well they are all young to me) in response to my initial enquiry. He had obviously done his homework because he was worried that he couldn't promise to provide ten men to form a minyan for us. I explained this would not be necessary and he was much relieved. He was also very worried about the need for burial in 24 hours because a Sunday burial would be very difficult in our part of the Highlands or on a bank holiday. However we can possibly sort this out. The council has agreed that we can 'separate' our part of the cemetery with white painted bricks in the grass. Hopefully we will also be able to sort out care of the body and a rabbi or celebrant for the service. This may all seem a little morbid, but having waited 30 years to fulfill my dream of living in Gairloch this is where we want to remain. I only write about this so that others with similar wishes or other queries know that if you ask sometimes, surprisingly, the answer is yes.

Rosh Hashanah: The Sounds of the Shofar

ADAPTED FROM RABBI YEHUDAH PRERO IN TORAH.ORG

When the Shofar is blown on Rosh Hashanah, three different types of noises are sounded. The first is a tekiah - one long continuous burst. The second sound is called a "shevarim." - three shorter blasts. The third is "teruah," a is a set of nine short staccato bursts. We are told that the shvarim and teruah are meant to sound like crying; drawing a long sigh and uttering short piercing cries. Their pain and suffering contrasts with the tekiah - a sound of triumph and joy.

Why do we have both sounds of joy and sounds of sorrow from the Shofar? The Ben Ish Chai explains by means of a story. A man had a ring specially made for him engraved with the words "This, too, will pass." When he was troubled and in pain, he looked at his ring and remembered that the suffering would eventually end. This thought comforted him. Also during times of happiness and comfort, he gazed at the ring and realised that his wealth and good fortune could change for the worse in an instant. He recognised that he had no reason to become conceited and haughty over circumstances that were beyond his control and could turn adverse without any warning. This ring put his life into perspective, and he was neither complacent nor despondent.

The tekiah is a sound of happiness. After the long exultant blast, we hear the shevarim and teruah. The stark contrast between these sounds is intentional. Listening to the shofar tells us not to forget G-d during times of contentment, and not to let our egos swell because of our achievements. Only with G-d's help did we prosper, and only with G-d's help will we continue to do so. Also the reverse: that in times of suffering G-d has not forsaken us, we should not become depressed and despondent. With the final tekiah we return to a state of jubilation again.



We hear 100 blasts of the Shofar each day of Rosh Hashanah. 'New Year' has two days, starting in the evening October 3rd and ending evening October 5th.

On Rosh Hashanah, our fate is written for the year to come, but only on Yom Kippur that the judgement is sealed. On Yom Kippur we wish each other Gmar Chatimah Tovah: Conclude a Good Sealing.



Yom Kippur falls on evening 12th to evening 13th October.

Kol Nidre: prayer recited at the start of Yom Kippur

ADAPTED FROM THE YOM KIPPUR SURVIVAL KIT BY SHIMON APISDORF

If you vowed to do something this year and now realise that you cannot live up to your word; this is Kol Nidre.

There are probably more Jews in synagogue for Kol Nidre than at any other time during the year. The question is, why? What is it about Kol Nidre that keeps the crowds coming back? Could it possibly be that consciously or unconsciously every Jew senses that Kol Nidre touches the most sensitive nerve of their humanity? That without Kol Nidre you can't have a Yom Kippur? That without Kol Nidre you can't have a life.

In Kol Nidre we make this statement: I realise that if I have made any verbal commitments, if I gave my word on anything, then without recourse to some higher authority there is no backing out. My word is my word—period. My word locks into place a reality that I can no longer undo. That reality, that word, binds me. Imagine a world where contracts didn't have to be signed. Where a person's word was "as good as gold" and a handshake was a done deal. Imagine if people actually lived with that kind of trust in one another. Imagine the integrity... Not to mention the elimination of mountains of paperwork and half the legal profession, it would be a different world. There is no other way to describe it. An entirely different world.

Kol Nidre is a time when we take a searing look inside. We ask ourselves, who can count on my word? Can my children, or my spouse, my friends, my boss? Can G-d? Can !! Can I count on my own word; Do I trust myself? Without credibility we have nothing. With it we have everything. Thus, Kol Nidre.

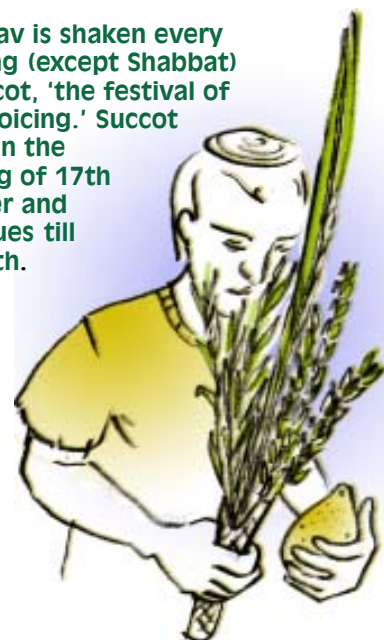
Succot: A Deeper Look at the Lulav

ADAPTED FROM MAZORNET, QUOTING ISMAR SCHORSCH.

It is noted that just as the plants of the lulav cannot grow without water, neither can we survive without God's blessing. Earlier authorities examine the form of the lulav and etrog for clues about their meaning. A midrash (parable) explains that they symbolise the importance of unity among different types of Jews. The etrog, a fruit, has both a flavor and a scent, like a Jew who is both learned and observant of the commandments. The lulav is from a date palm, and so it has a taste but no scent. It is likened to a Jew to is learned but does not apply that knowledge in action. A myrtle has a pleasant odor but there is nothing tasty about it, and its parallel is the Jew who has little book learning behind his or her observance. Finally the willow lacks both fragrance and food value, just like the Jew who neither studies the Torah nor keeps the commandments. The differences between Jews may be substantial, but, like the lulav and etrog which must be held together to be waved, only when Jews come together do they merit a blessing.

The same midrash quotes one of the Psalms "All my bones shall proclaim, 'God, who can be likened to You!' and comments that the long straight lulav is likened to a person's spine, the tiny myrtle leaves represent the eyes, the elongated willow leaves the lips, and the bulbous and firm etrog is equated with the heart. As in the first example, holding all parts of the lulav and etrog together for the blessing informs the meaning of the metaphor. The secret ingredient to achieving the happiness promised by Succot is to feel unity within, to be true to oneself and not say one thing and feel another.

The lulav is shaken every morning (except Shabbat) of Succot, 'the festival of our rejoicing.' Succot starts in the evening of 17th October and continues till the 26th.



Chief Rabbi visits the Scottish Parliament

TIME FOR REFLECTION IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The Chief Rabbi delivered the "Time for Reflection" message to the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 14th September:

We in the Jewish community are fast approaching the holy of holies of the Jewish year: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the new year and the day of atonement. These are days in which we engage in honest self-examination. We ask ourselves not what did we do right but what did we do wrong? And we use two ideas that between them have the power to change the world. The first is apology; the second is forgiveness and they are the only ideas that are strong enough to break the grip of the past.

Apology and forgiveness tell us that we can mend fractured relationships. We can acknowledge errors and begin again. We can't rewrite the past; but we *can* write a different future. Homo sapiens is the only form of life known to us that can say: I did wrong. I'm sorry. Let's work together to make it different next time. Human beings are the only species that can forgive.

That matters now more than I can say. Today, for the first time in my lifetime, we stand at a crossroads in history - not the history of Scotland alone, or even Britain, or even Europe, but of the world. Let me be precise. What we face is not, as some have said, a clash of civilizations. What we face is a clash *within* civilizations: within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; and also within the great secular humanist tradition so proudly associated with this city - the tradition of Adam Smith, Adam Fergusson, David Hume.

The question splitting us apart is: how do we deal with change, unprecedented, anxiety-creating change? With confidence or with fear? With reason or inflammatory emotion? Do we seek to impose our views by terror and rage? Or do we use the great institutions of what Adam Fergusson called civil society - the willingness to make space for the people not like us? Are we convinced that we are always right, or can we apologise when we get it wrong? Are we destined forever to hate, or do we have the courage to forgive?

A tone of anger has entered public debate since 9/11 and 7/7 that frankly terrifies me, as if there really were a clash of civilizations instead of what there really is - a clash within each group between moderates and extremists; those who care for freedom and those who care only for victory at whatever cost. Long ago Moses set us a challenge, which still resonates. "Behold I set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse, therefore choose life so that you and your children may live." Let us choose life, and choose it together. Let us focus on the future, and forgive the past. May you have a blessed New Year, and may God be with you in all you do.

During his recent visit to Scotland the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, accompanied by Ephraim Borowski and Leah Granat, held meetings with the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, Presiding Officer, Party leaders and Church leaders. Ministers reaffirmed their support for Holocaust Memorial Day, and confirmed their support for the introduction of a clause supporting gittin (religious divorce) into the Family Law Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament.

SCOJeC hosted lunch in the Scottish Parliament for MSPs, faith leaders and invited guests during which the Chief Rabbi responded to questions. He received an extremely warm welcome from everyone, and his speech at Time for Reflection was very well received.



ABOVE: SIR JONATHAN SACKS, THE CHIEF RABBI WITH DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER NICOL STEPHEN.

BELOW: CHIEF RABBI ADDRESSING MSPs, FAITH LEADERS, AND INVITED GUESTS IN ONE OF THE PARLIAMENT'S IMPOSING COMMITTEE ROOMS.



Event day in Dundee Synagogue

11TH SEPTEMBER 2005

On Sunday the 11th of September, SCoJeC members gathered in the Dundee Synagogue for a day of learning, chatting, eating and of course, making new friends.

The first item of the day was a talk on Rosh Hashanah by Elkan Levy, the director of the office of Small Communities. This began normally enough but rapidly digressed into an extremely interesting debate on moral issues and teaching. Somehow, we never quite returned to the original topic but the group seemed to be happy with the way it went and certainly took the issues and debate very seriously. I suspect that, left alone, the group would have continued the discussion quite happily through the rest of the day. We then moved on to the second item on the agenda – would one want to be involved in politics at any level up to an MSP. For this, we divided into groups to discuss several relevant questions and then fed the views back to the whole group. The results were interesting as people realized that almost all views on current affairs issues are political. It seemed that everyone agreed that political involvement is always important. This too might have continued for ever, however Leah Granat finally tore us away to attack our lunch.

The break proved to be a very social occasion. Both the food and the conversation were excellent. New friends were made and old friendships were renewed. Eventually, we were all chased back in time for the first of the afternoon events. This was a session organized by Ditzza Granat, Gabrielle Levi and Ellie Angell, 3 girls from B'nei Akiva. They had been managing a creche in the morning but joined us to teach some new songs. Clearly, the children had not had time to wear these girls out as they sang their way happily through the songs accompanied by those of us who are capable of more than a croak (me for one!). This was followed by Ephraim Borowski talking on the Jewish calendar – a subject I'd never fully understood (being the "new boy"). Now at last, I have some sort of understanding of what people are talking about. I suspect that several others feel the same way. A nice straightforward explanation was all that was needed – thanks Ephraim.

Finally, Elkan Levy returned to give a short talk on Yom Kippur. This time he was able to stay on track and went into some detail as to the whys and wherefores of the Yom Kippur services.

Finally, a last coffee and chat and the group began to break up. One final clean up and everyone was on their way home after an excellent day.

Many thanks to the organizers and speakers. Let's have another one soon!

ISAAC LIPKOWITZ



SCoJeC was delighted to be able to assist with the organisation of this very successful event. The mix of education and fun was appreciated by all, but the most important thing was the opportunity for isolated Jewish people to meet one another.

We are already planning the next event, probably on the west coast during Chanukah.



Dates of chagim (festivals) 2005

Rosh Hashanah: evening of 3rd October
and days 4th to 5th October
Tzom Gedalyah: 6th October
Kol Nidre: evening of 12th October
Yom Kippur: 13th October
Succot: Yom Tov evening of 17th
October, days 18th to 19th October
Succot: Chol Hamoed 20th, 21st, 22nd
and 23rd October
Hoshanah Rabbah: 24th October
Shemini Atzeret: evening of 24th
October and day 25th October
Simchat Torah: evening of 25th October
and day 26th October