

# Nostra Aetate

## "IN OUR TIME"

It is now 40 years since the Vatican issued the declaration 'Nostra Aetate' opening the way for dialogue between the Catholic and Jewish communities. At the suggestion of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, hosted a kosher reception to mark this significant occasion, which was attended by senior members of the Jewish and Catholic communities, representatives of other faith communities and the Scottish Executive.

Rabbi Rubin of Glasgow's Giffnock Synagogue and Cardinal O'Brien planted a tree in the garden of the Cardinal's official residence to symbolise the continuing growth of understanding and dialogue between the two faiths. John Cosgrove, Chair of SCoJeC announced that the Scottish Council intends to plant trees in Israel in the Cardinal's name to mark the anniversary.

The Cardinal and Rabbi Rubin welcomed the rapprochement between Judaism and Catholicism that Nostra Aetate had made possible, and expressed pride in the shared moral values of both faiths. Rabbi Rubin described Nostra Aetate as a 'brave document that had brought a welcome breath of fresh air to interfaith relations', spoke warmly of the visit to Israel made by Pope John Paul II and said:

**'It is now time to go further, to take this respect and friendship we share to the streets. To the youth who perhaps are caught in a trap of hate towards society which manifests itself through crime. We need to talk louder than bombs and terrorism, and find ways together to combat the few who believe that they can conquer the world's belief and mind through terror.'**

Ephraim Borowski, Director of SCoJeC said 'I am delighted at this very public recognition of the growing warmth between the faith communities of Scotland'.



**ISSUE 8**  
**TU B'SHVAT 5766**  
**FEBRUARY 2006**

**Welcome to the 8th issue of Four Corners, an issue celebrating friendship between the Jewish and Catholic communities in Scotland, remembering the horrific events of the Holocaust; mourning a pillar of the Scottish Jewish community and finding out that, should a UFO land in Dundee, its occupants cannot be counted in a minyan!**

**Thank you to those who returned the questionnaire – we'll let you know the findings in a future issue of Four Corners (and it's not too late to send it back if it's still sitting on the sideboard.....!)**

**As ever, this is your newsletter – we hope you enjoy reading it, and do please send articles and photos for the next issue (address at the foot of the page).**

## Another Corner - in Outer Space

There are some situations you really could not make up. Imagine the intrepid traveller debarking (as they now say) from his flight to Heathrow. Looking over his shoulder to exchange a pleasantry with cabin staff, he collides with his most high-profile former student (who had better remain anonymous, but whose leadership of a political party was recently suspended in alcohol). At that instant my phone rings: the senior reporter of an allegedly quality Sunday wishes to know the Jewish view of extraterrestrials!

"No Comment," will not suffice, so after several conversations with people who inexplicably could not answer for laughing, I am referred to the "world's leading expert on Jewish extraterrestrials" (why just the world's - why not the Universe's?). We have a definitive ruling that ET cannot be included in a minyan for prayer. The Martian Beth Din may perhaps have come to a different conclusion but they were unavailable for comment.

FOR RESULTING ARTICLE, SEE: [WWW.SUNDAYHERALD.COM/53020](http://WWW.SUNDAYHERALD.COM/53020)

EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

DESIGN & LAYOUT: JQS@JQSDSIGN.NET

**THE CORNERS OF SCOTLAND**

**Dundee**  
Paul: 01382 540 078

**Aberdeen**  
Ehud: 01224 485 601

**Argyll & Highlands**  
Frank: 01445 712151

**Students**  
Rabbi Dovid: 07801 491 386



**Please send us your comments about and contributions to Four Corners**

**SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

**JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
222 FENWICK ROAD, GIFFNOCK, GLASGOW G46 6UE  
TEL: 0141-577 8208 FAX : 0141-577 8202**

**E-MAIL: J-SCOT@J-SCOT.ORG  
CONTACT: LEAH GRANAT 07887 488 100**

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# SCOTTISH SCHOOLS TRIP TO **auschwitz**



## ...a Scottish girl carrying a box of Israeli memorial candles...

RACHEL COLLINS

My participation on the recent Scottish Schools trip to Auschwitz was a last minute opportunity, while visiting Scotland from Israel, so there was no time to ready myself with either background reading or emotional preparation.

Travelling through the white wintry Polish countryside, reflecting on the difference between my journey to Auschwitz from that of the innocent who were marched to their deaths, it was hard to know what I was beginning to feel; more than sadness and anger I felt a deeply painful wound of hundreds of years of persecution. Through expulsion and pogroms the Jews remained true to their beliefs, laws and customs, complete with daily prayers that include a vision for the future; the end to dispersion and the return to a sovereign Israel. I wondered if the Scots on the trip were aware of this.

Throughout the day our young Polish guide calmly portrayed the severity of what happened in her hometown of Oswiecim forty years before she was born. The freezing cold tore through our layers of warm clothing added to the disturbing nature of the day.

Auschwitz appeared perversely handsome in the winter snow nonetheless the underlying feeling of death, hate and abuse would not leave me. We saw the legendary piles of shoes, glasses, bags, brushes, hair and empty Zyklon B cans at Auschwitz I. Horrific. On one

cell wall, an inmate had used a fingernail to carve a portrait of Jesus on the cross. I stared at it unable to decide whether it was the victims' reflection of self, or a call to G-d. Perhaps it was both. Another time in history I would not have got out of this death camp alive. The sensation of this understanding was overwhelming and I marveled at my very existence. Am Yisrael Chai! I wept to the sound of a deeply painful 'Kel Male Rachamim', warm tears running down my cold cheeks.

The methodical approach for maximising the efficiency of death is clear at first glance of Auschwitz II - Birkenau. All around me Scottish schoolchildren and teachers were astounded by the cruelty of the place. For me this was not new: as a Jew, the message of the Holocaust was ingrained as a child and forms a substantial part of who I am today.

Another significant message from my elders of the importance of our Jewish roots; I learnt the Aleph Bet before the ABC, a message I internalised and literally live out every day in Israel. All the signs in Auschwitz are in Polish, English and Hebrew. My heart jumped as I watched a Scottish girl carrying a box of Israeli memorial candles, with Hebrew print on the side.

According to Psalm 126 when we return to Zion "we will be like dreamers", our long exile nothing but a nightmare. With the Holocaust and Israeli Independence fresh in our collective memory we are still waking up from the nightmare and defining our vision for our return to Israel. We will continue to wake up and eventually realise that Israel, our dream, will have truly become reality.



# A NEW SCOTTISH EXHIBITION **testimony**

'Testimony' is a photo-documentary exhibition that aims to challenge all forms of prejudice and intolerance. The strong emotive images produced by photographer Nick Sidle (two of which are shown on this page) are linked with the moving testimonies of survivors adapted for the exhibition by Paula Kitching of the London Jewish Cultural Centre. The exhibition opens with the horrors of Auschwitz and the last image is a chilling reminder that racism and anti-semitism is alive today, and thus that the story of Auschwitz must never be forgotten. However, the exhibition ends with the overwhelming feeling of hope for the future through the inclusion of images of young people taking part in the March of the Living.

On 26th January, the Testimony Exhibition was launched by Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Communities, at the Scottish ceremonies for Holocaust Memorial Day in 2005 to mark the 60th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Thanks to the Scottish Executive, it will now form the core of the new permanent Holocaust Memorial in Scotland.

At the opening, Sita Kumari (Director of Heartstone) and Wanda Hutny (Deputy Director of the Auschwitz Museum) spoke movingly of the significance of Auschwitz today and of its impact on the 28 million people who have visited it during the last 60 years.

Ephraim Borowski, Director of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, emphasised the importance of telling the stories of those who lived through or were murdered in the Holocaust 'so that those who are too young to remember can see and hear some of what those who would dearly wish to forget cannot drive from their minds; so that those who would wilfully deny these horrors can be faced with the evidence.'

BELOW, AT THE LAUNCH, LEFT TO RIGHT: SITA KUMARI, WANDA HUTNY, MALCOLM CHISHOLM AND EPHRAIM BOROWSKI



**Heartstone, the Scottish non-profit organisation that produced the exhibition, is now working with a range of individuals and organisations to gather testimonies to be incorporated into the exhibition. If you have a story which you would like to be included in this memorial, please contact Claire Wright, 01349 865400 or [info@heartstone.co.uk](mailto:info@heartstone.co.uk).**

# auschwitz

## Hell on Earth!

DR ASIFA HUSSAIN, LECTURER AT THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Why did I do it? Why did I go to Auschwitz? I was just an ignorant member of the public, busy living my life in my own safe cocoon. I had seen pictures, watched the movies, heard constant reminders of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but it made no real impact on me.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was a killing centre. My emotions are hard to put into words. When we entered the camp, I felt physically nauseous, my stomach felt twisted. We were shown the gas chambers, in the main concentration camp. The hospital where medical experimentations were carried out on children, women and infants. Human beings were put through gas chambers, frozen to death, tested with drugs and castrated. I remember seeing the baby clothes of the little ones laid in a glass casket. We also saw the wall where thousands of people were executed by the SS soldiers. People had already laid flowers.

Everywhere we went there was a stench of dry blood and just foul immorality. The aura of death was still in the atmosphere; I felt really small and intimidated by the entire experience. There were times that I

## SCOTTISH SCHOOLS TRIP (continued from page 2)

tried not to look around the camp but just stared at the ground. It was scary but with Irene on the one arm and Rachel on the other – together we were strong. Psychologically we felt safe, protecting each other but feeling vulnerable at same time. We saw mountains of hair, shoes, suitcases, personal belongings of the victims. The possessions personalised the people, I felt embarrassed that we were there watching some fairground attraction but on the other hand we were keeping their memories alive.

By the evening it must have been minus 5, it was cold, dark and lonely. We used torches to see where we were going. It was freezing to the point that we could not feel our toes and ears. Walking on the railway line back to the coaches, made us think about the prisoners, scantily dressed, being made to withstand all the temperatures of nature. I spoke to Irene about the Jewish faith and how it required women to be modestly covered. I can only imagine how humiliating and shameful it must have been for some of the women to stand there naked. Losing all dignity in front of their brothers, sons, and strange men.

I returned even more convinced how vile and depraved racism and nationalism can be. I recall coming across a reference to the Nazis running competitions encouraging German children to write in, one little girl wrote, "People are so bothered by the way we're treating the Jews. They can't understand it, because they are God's creatures. But cockroaches are also God's creatures and we destroy them." (the Toadstool - a Nazi children's book). It is this sort of material that creates racism and gives a political platform to racist parties such as the BNP.

We must all try to live together so humans cannot inflict pain on other humans, that history can never repeat itself. We must remember the holocaust and prevent ethnic cleansing at all costs. We must engage with our politicians so that we can prevent any unintentional racist legislation from being implemented. We are all responsible for humankind. We must protect the disadvantaged and stand up for those that are ill-treated. We must learn from the lessons of the past. The Nazis murdered 6 million people. Jewish, Christians, physically and mentally challenged, Gypsies, homosexuals, Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's witness and those who did not agree politically.

I returned a different person. I was angry with the Germans and with the world for allowing this to happen but the day ended by Rabbi Marcus leading a prayer and saying "that we must not get angry", that anger can lead to sinning itself – and that would make us no different from the perpetrators of genocide. We all lit candles for the deceased, laying them in the crisp snow.

## To remember is not enough...

ROWENA ARSHAD, CENTRE FOR EDUCATION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY IN SCOTLAND (CERES) UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Joining about 100 young people and 50 adults, we left at around 7am on a damp Wednesday morning (Nov 23rd) from Glasgow Airport for a day visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. An air of anticipation, trepidation surrounded us.

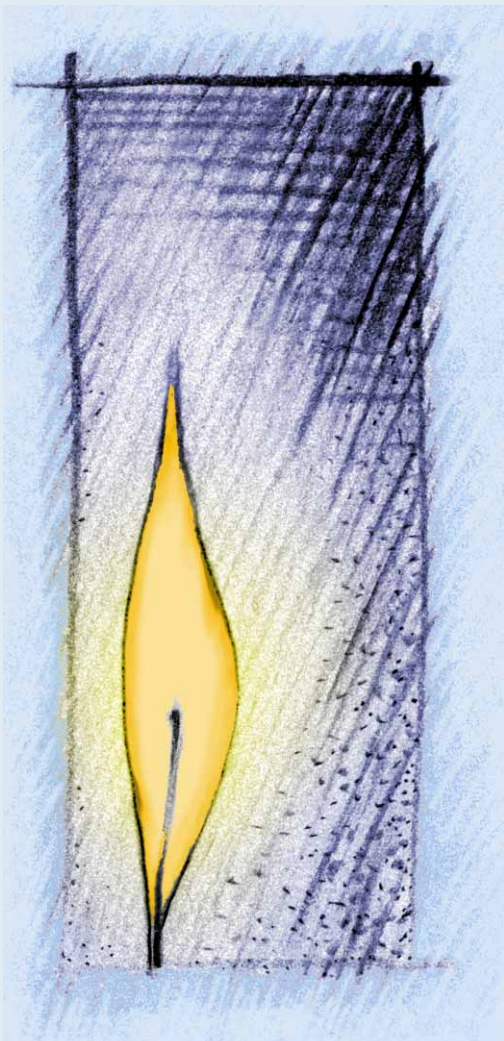
When we got to Auschwitz 1, we found a museum. We had such a short time to take so much in. It was very, very, very cold and reflected the chill I suspect that went through each person as we moved from block to block, each representing their own history of organised cruelty. The Nazis had made an industry of genocide and created economic gains from this - what kind of people exploits extermination for economic purposes?

Personally, I found Birkenau (Auschwitz 2) most shattering: the scale, the desolation, loneliness, the crudity of the situation. Overall, the shocking thing for me was that until the early 1990s, the Shoah and Final Solution was eclipsed from the

histories of the concentration camps by other nationalistic memories such as that of murdered patriotic soldiers. Why was this?

Later, we visited Krakow and the only functioning synagogue left in the city, the Rama synagogue in the Kazimeirz (Kushmir) quarter. I learnt that before the Shoah, there were at least 60,000 Jews in Krakow (about 25% of the population) and after, only about 6,000. For me the total destruction of Jewish culture, life and heritage was distressing. There it dawned on me that this is what it was all about. Often people do not understand this, they remember the terror, horror and genocide but do not fully comprehend how the landscape changed with the Final Solution. To remember is not enough, we need to do something with that memory, and this is why trips like Wednesday are so important.

As educators, it is important for us to create opportunities for pupils to gain insight into the experience of being discriminated against, discriminating, witnessing discrimination and taking action against discrimination. We must not shy away from difficult topics and we need to present opportunities for pupils to practise standing up for themselves, each other and unknown others.



# Tu B'Shvat...

15 Shevat 5766  
13 February 2006

The "New year for Trees", officially marks the beginning of the new 'tax year' for certain biblical regulations about agriculture. It is generally marked now as the beginning of spring, with tree-planting ceremonies, and a meal ("seder") of fruit dishes. It is also an appropriate time to consider what Judaism has to say about the natural world.

Scriptural writings are full of natural imagery and are steeped in respect for nature, while biblical and later rabbinic law provide comprehensive legislation on issues such as conservation, animal welfare, species preservation, sanitation and pollution.

The Torah orders the creation of green belts around cities (Numbers 35:4.) Shabbat is a weekly rest for animals and the natural world as well as humans. We are called upon to offer thanks for all manner of natural phenomena (rainbow, lightning, shooting stars, the first blossoms of a tree, etc.). A most dramatic ecological gesture is Shemita,



the seventh year rest for the environment, when all fields lie fallow.

There are dozens of exhortations in rabbinic writings to learn self-improvement from natural phenomena and non-human life. Hunting is seriously frowned upon in Judaism, and cruelty to animals is repeatedly prohibited in the Torah and the Talmud and later codes — and is one of the seven Noahide Laws incumbent on all humankind (as contrasted with the 613 commandments applicable to Jews themselves.)

Justice and fairness, especially towards those vulnerable, is a theme running through scripture. Every seven years all debt would be cancelled — an interesting model for the issue of Third World debt in our era.

The basics of environmentalism are Torah law. Psalms declares, "To the Lord belongs the Earth and all it contains." Two thousand years ago the Talmud (particularly Baba Batra chap.2) extensively covers the regulation against atmospheric, water and even noise pollution, and arising from Deuteronomy (23:12) issues of waste disposal.

BASED ON  
'JUDAISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT'  
BY RABBI YOSSIE IVES  
WWW.AISH.COM

A moral consciousness based on Torah values would surely see merit in the argument for ethical investments, to ensure that monies are not invested in companies that use child labour, create environmental degradation or are socially irresponsible. After all, "Justice, justice you shall pursue" (Deut. 16:20).

In a raft of 'Green' issues Judaism has a balanced and reasoned approach that could be a source of pride to Jews and a source of inspiration to the non-Jewish world. More importantly, it could lead to positive action.

Judaism, with its rich heritage and history of respect for nature and non-human life, is in a perfect position to articulate a better-adjusted and more balanced environmental ethic. It would be in keeping with our tradition to do so. We would be tuning a blind eye to our own values if we choose to say 'not my problem'.

# What we do on Purim...

14 Adar 5766  
14 March 2006

There is a custom before reading the Megillah in the synagogue, to contribute three 50 pence coins to charity. This coin, half the standard unit of currency, symbolizes the half-shekel which every Jew used to give as dues to the Temple in Jerusalem (see Exodus 30:11-16). But why does the Torah specify a half-shekel instead of a whole?

The answer is that by giving only a half, each Jew realizes that he'll never become "complete" unless he is part of the larger community. Accordingly, Jewish law, the Torah, states that everyone — rich or poor — is to give no more and no less than a half-shekel. This teaches that every Jew is equally important to our national mission. Just as removing one letter invalidates a Torah Scroll, so too the loss of one Jew hinders our destiny.

Sometimes it is through our enemies that we come to realise that every Jew is precious and integral to the future of our nation. In modern times as well, we've seen that the anti-Semite doesn't distinguish between an assimilated Jew and an observant Jew. Likewise, The Talmud says that the biggest problem of the Jewish people at the time of Mordechai and Esther was a lack of unity. It was the wicked Haman who reminded us that we stand together as one people: In plotting genocide, he referred to the Jews as Am Echad — and planned that they should literally "hang together."

HEAR THE BOOK OF ESTHER...

DRESS IN COSTUME...

LAUGH AND DRINK UNTIL...



The Megillah is read...



The McGillar is real



... can't spot the difference

## How can loss of mental clarity through alcohol bring a person to spiritual clarity?

In the Megillah we see a miraculous 180-degree shift in fortune - the endangered Jews are suddenly safe. One who thought he lived alone in a hostile world suddenly discovers that God is really there, and laughs aloud in the joy of the unexpected.

Drink provides an opportunity to transcend our senses which blind us to seeing God behind all aspects of reality, manipulating events for our good. Even when things look bad and we're suffering, in some way it has got to be all for the best, because there's a beneficent God.

We are encouraged to "drink until you can't tell the difference between 'Blessed is Mordechai' and 'Cursed is Haman.'" It is only because of our limited perceptions that we see a difference between the two. In God's infinite reality, all is ultimately for the good, and we can laugh with absolute trust in our future.

# Dr. Philip Orkin

A few days before Rosh Hashanah a very old friend — in both senses of the word — died.

Phil Orkin, together with his wife Sarah, were the people who led to our first period of living in Scotland. As a student representative to the British Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in Aberdeen in 1963 I asked for kosher digs, which turned out to be with Sarah and Phil. With the help of their introductions, we returned to Aberdeen after graduation and marriage as post-graduate students.

At the time they were the leading figures in the Aberdeen Community and opened their home to any Jewish visitors. Phil led the Shabbat morning services, as well as community seders, and they were a fount of Jewish information in Aberdeen.

After we left Aberdeen we kept in touch, and met regularly once they moved to London. When they were in their late 80's Sarah told me that they visited "the old people" in their community to help out; they didn't regard themselves as old. Later we attended a Shabbat service and kiddush to celebrate Phil's 90th birthday.

When we returned to live in Gairloch after Frank's retirement Phil asked a cousin of his in Argyll to get in touch with us. The introduction led us to the group that is now JNAH, and, through them we are now once again involved in the small Scottish Jewish communities.

When Martin Orkin wrote to tell us that Phil had died (at 96) we were sad to have lost both our old friends but we were grateful that we had known them and will always value the part they played in our lives, and especially for making a home in Scotland an important part of it. VALERIE HOUSE

## SCoJeC Update



Following the AGM on 4th December 2005 we proudly present the new Management Team, as follows:

**Chair:** John Cosgrove (Edinburgh)  
**Vice-Chairs:** Philip Mason (Edinburgh)  
Kenneth Collins (Glasgow)  
Frank House (Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands)  
**Director:** Ephraim Borowski (Glasgow)  
**Treasurer:** Daniel Clapham (Glasgow)  
**Secretary:** Paul Spicker (Dundee)

## Advance Notice! Event at Dundee Shul

### "Shavuot & the Scottish Parliament"

SUNDAY MAY THE ??<sup>TH</sup> (date to be confirmed - we'll let you know)

Lunch will be served, (not to mention morning coffee and afternoon tea,) a creche provided, plus the company of friendly and congenial people (i.e. all of you!)

SEE THE PESACH ISSUE OF FOUR CORNERS FOR MORE DETAILS  
OR PHONE LEAH 07887 488 100

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Corner

IN ISRAEL (LEFT) AND UK (BELOW,) JUDITH LIPMAN

What's small, solid and red-eyed and sits and squawks at 6am? Um, actually a 5th Corner after a long and cramped night flight.

A long time ago in 1994, an assorted people either Jewish by race or religion or a bit of both gathered in Lochgilhead under the aegis of Barry Kaye and became known as the Argyll & Bute Community... plus Galloway. I was a 5th corner even in those days, a wee lost soul in Stranraer and thence for a bit on the Isle of Mull. Cowans Croft (the home of Jacqueline Speyer, the 2nd co-ordinator of the group) was a haven for me.

And now I rewarded her by thumping on her Jerusalem door unexpectedly early. I found Cowans transported to an old Arab-style house in the Nachlaot area. Books, comfy saggy chairs and organised clutter – and the welcome just as warm as ever.

Despite being busy as a carer while in Israel, we shared some good times together – belting through Machane Yehuda market erev Succot, climbing over and around deliveries and the crowds... climbing the walls to take the succah down... making soup... and again, progress in my spiritual growth. Aye it was a good reunion between two ex-pat Scots-by-adoption.

Thanks to Four Corners, being the odd Fifth Corner and reporting on small communities it seems I've befriended Kings Lynn and spent 'Xmas Eve Shabbat' in the small congregation of Cambridge Reform Congregation at Cockcroft Community Centre. John, Jeanette and Rebecca from Kings Lynn took me there and then they came back to Cambridge youth hostel where I was staying over the Christmas break. Kings Lynn Jewish community sends greetings to the Four Corners of Scotland and hopes everyone had a good Chanukah.

## A Wild Succah

JACQUELINE (SPEYER) FRIEDMAN

Looking at the pic of the JNAH succah in 2001 in 4C's issue 4, you can just see a mass of green. It was willows, rhododendron and anything else that grew in my wild garden, which all needed cut back; an exercise in garden maintenance combined with creative construction. My knowledge of a traditional succah was very limited.

Now in the centre of Jerusalem, with my husband, this year's succah would be different. Our yard already has four walls but Arnon ignored the obvious way to cover from wall to wall, fixed a single upright in the middle and struts in a star from it to the walls. At this stage it looked like a merry-go-round waiting to start. Then bulky date-palm branches with their sharp leaves following the star shape transformed it to a shelter, but inside it still looked like our yard... until out came Arnon's grandmother's old sheets, my collection of un-wearable scarves, paper-chains from children, special stones, shells and plastic flowers, a niece's picture, two rather more traditional ones, greenery and dried grasses. The creative process was enhanced by the anticipation of welcoming a special guest first thing in the morning. Judith Lipman found her own way from the airport to our back door, thereby walking into our newly built (and again rather unorthodox) succah before the house.

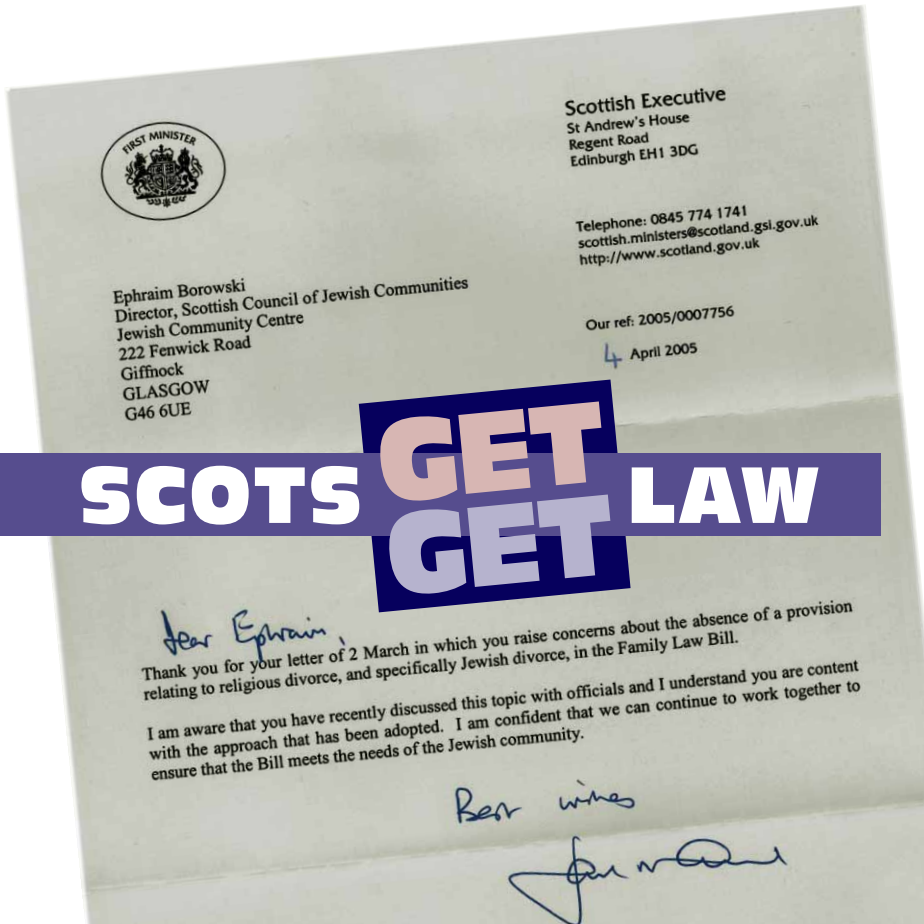
The Argyll succah was wild in the natural sense – reflecting the principle of leaving the comfortable home to express trust in God's protection (albeit theoretically, due to autumnal weather conditions.) The Nachlaot succah was 'wild' in atmosphere, befitting the joy and relief in God's forgiveness after Yom Kippur. Whether our environmental wilderness is urban or rural, our spiritual wilderness is compensated by the sheer happiness of Succot.



**SCoJeC Chair, John Cosgrove** "This is an historic day for the Jewish Community and the Scottish Council. For the first time, we have succeeded in changing Scots Law for the benefit of our Community. It's been a long and difficult path with many obstacles in the way. Ephraim and Leah's patience and persistence has been rewarded with a remarkably well constructed piece of legislation of which the Community can be really proud. Clause 13a will be in the statute book as a permanent tribute to all their hard work."



## The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities



**Hugh Henry, Deputy Justice Minister** "I am proud that we were able to address an anomaly that existed for certain people in the Jewish faith."

**Stewart Stevenson, SNP spokesman** "We have addressed an historic wrong in relation to the power of some Jewish men... over Jewish wives, and that is welcome."



LEFT TO RIGHT  
BACK:  
KEN MACINTOSH  
(MSP FOR EAST  
RENFREWSHIRE)  
HUGH HENRY  
(DEPUTY JUSTICE  
MINISTER)  
STEWART STEVENSON  
(SNP JUSTICE  
SPOKESMAN)  
FRONT:  
LEAH GRANAT  
(SCoJeC)  
CATHY JAMIESON  
(JUSTICE MINISTER)

**Divorce, along with bereavement, is said to be the most traumatic experience we can face. How much worse can it be to need two divorces?**

Because Jewish couples are 'twice-married' – by both Jewish and civil law – two separate divorces are needed if the marriage fails, to enable both partners to marry again. There can be problems if one of them – usually the husband – uses the religious divorce, ('get') as a blackmailing tool against his wife (as in "I'll only give you a get if you give up your right to any share in the marital home...")

Some countries (including England) have addressed this problem by means of legislation, enabling a court to delay the granting of a civil divorce temporarily, until after the get has been completed. This has proved extremely successful, but it hasn't been the case in Scotland, where, even if they were aware of the problem – which they often weren't – sheriffs have been powerless to act.

Since devolution this issue has periodically been discussed between SCoJeC and an extremely sympathetic Scottish Executive but there has never been any opportunity to legislate... until now.

The Family Law Bill, passed by the Scottish Parliament in December 2005, provided that opportunity, so in late 2004, discussions intensified. It was agreed that an amendment (which Ken Macintosh, MSP for East Renfrewshire was happy to propose) would be introduced during stage 2 of the Bill when it is minutely scrutinised in Committee.

There followed a year of detailed discussions as to the precise wording of the amendment, which had to satisfy the strictures of the Scottish Parliament Standing Orders, the European Convention of Human Rights, and the requirements of Jewish law. The placing and possible (and possibly impossible) interpretation of every word was minutely examined by Scottish Executive lawyers and Orthodox and Reform Rabbis to ensure the amendment would achieve the desired result.

Parallel to this a major information campaign was launched by SCoJeC. Ephraim and Leah spoke to countless MSPs individually and in small groups to explain why the issue is so important to the Jewish community. The MSPs response was overwhelmingly supportive and the amendment was accepted by the Justice 1 Committee by a majority of 6:1.

With such a strong endorsement in Committee it seemed unlikely that there would be any threat to the amendment at Stage 3 – the final debate among all MSPs in the Chamber of the Parliament. But 'unlikely' doesn't mean 'impossible' and at the very last moment one MSP decided to challenge the religious divorce clause and put forward an amendment to delete it altogether.

Following several days of intensive discussion and much holding of breath the Scottish Parliament debated the merits of including the religious divorce clause and voted decisively (108 votes to 7 with 1 abstention) to keep it in the Bill, justifying the First Minister's optimism in a letter to Ephraim in which he wrote "I am confident that we can continue to work together to ensure that the Bill meets the needs of the Jewish community".

**Murray Tosh, Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament**, described SCoJeC as "a role model for other communities... Ephraim and Leah are very familiar figures around the Parliament and are very effective at putting your view. It's thanks to them that there is now a provision for religious divorce included in the Family Law Bill."