

# JUDAISM IN A BOX

There was standing room only at the launch of SCoJeC's new educational resource, "JOES boxes" - "Jewish Objects for Education in Scotland" - in Giffnock. This was attended by more than 30 teachers from as far away as Caithness, as well as MSPs Annabel Goldie and Hanzala Malik.

Zoe Jacobs, SCoJeC's Education and Community Development Officer, explained that SCoJeC's objective is *"to improve the quality of education about Jews and Judaism, deepen understanding, and make abstract ideas and people real and living"*. The initiative was welcomed by Joe Walker, Senior Education Officer for Religious and Moral Education at Education Scotland. Prof Joe Goldblatt, who championed the boxes and enthusiastically sourced many of the items, singled out his favourites: small Torah scrolls which were donated by the synagogue in Dallas that he attended as a child, and *tzedakah* (charity) boxes that have been decorated by children from the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community.

Zoe then invited the audience to play the part of the pupils in a demonstration of how the artefacts can be used to bring Judaism to life in the classroom, and the session ended with a lively question and answer session and an opportunity for everyone to examine the resources.

SCoJeC is still looking for some additional items to include in the resource boxes. If you would be willing to donate a tallit, siddur, shabbat candlesticks, kiddush cup, or havdalah candle, please contact Zoe Jacobs:

[education@scojec.org](mailto:education@scojec.org) / 07724 549 817

ANTICLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:  
JOE WALKER FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND AND PROF JOE GOLDBLATT ADDRESSING THE TEACHERS; FIONA FRANK EXPLAINING THE PROJECT TO ANNABEL GOLDIE MSP; HANZALA MALIK MSP (WEARING TALLIT) LOOKS ON AS TEACHERS HOLD UP A TALLIT TO FORM A CHUPPAH (WEDDING CANOPY).



## Jewish Music, Food, and Learning

Around 100 members of the local Jewish communities and interested others attended a highly successful evening of music, food, and learning in St Andrews University's imposing Parliament Hall. The event, which was generously funded by the Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable Trust, started with a kosher buffet, followed by a lively presentation by Zoe Jacobs, with lots of audience participation, on her work to bring Judaism to life in mainstream schools.

Then came a fantastic concert of foot-tapping Klezmer and Scottish dance tunes, traditional and contemporary Yiddish songs, some beautifully sung unaccompanied, others backed by fiddle or accordion, from award-winning US musician Michael Alpert, who has now settled in Fife, and Edinburgh-based Klezmer and Scottish fiddle player Gica Loening. There was also traditional Yiddish poetry - and even a Yiddish version of *Jabberwocky*, *Yomervokhets*. The lights were turned right down for an atmospheric Yiddish murder ballad *Tsvelef a Zeyger* ("Twelve o'clock") the moral of which is never to meddle in your daughter's love affairs or you'll send up going to her funeral instead of her wedding. Then, after a beautiful Yiddish love song written by Michael himself, the concert ended with the audience joining in a rousing chorus.

This was one of SCoJeC's best-attended concerts, and everyone was spellbound. As one of the audience said, *"The music was superb - made me feel very nostalgic and wanting more!"*

ISSUE 49 · MARCH 2016 · PURIM 5776



The  
Scottish Council  
of Jewish  
Communities

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# Helping Our Neighbours ON MITZVAH DAY

The children of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation celebrated Mitzvah Day on Sunday 22 November by collecting household necessities and washing cars to raise money for Fresh Start, an organisation which assists homeless people to establish their first tenancy. Meanwhile members of Sukkat Shalom worked in the garden of the Hollies, one of the Camphill Community residences for adults with learning disabilities in Edinburgh.

The Glasgow community pulled together to donate clothing, blankets, towels, and bedding for refugees and the homeless. The collection points at Giffnock and Newton Mearns Synagogues and Maccabi soon had large piles of black bags that were then uplifted by local charities that then delivered the donated items to where they were needed.

TOP AND LEFT: GARDENING AT THE HOLLIES;  
BOTTOM RIGHT: WASHING CARS AT  
EDINBURGH SYNAGOGUE.



## IsraAid for Aberdeen

A team of five volunteers from IsraAid came to Deeside in the second week of January, following a request from an Alford resident who saw support provided to flood victims in Yorkshire and asked for help.

The Israelis worked alongside other local volunteers in Ballater to distribute donated items, and clear out homes and a caravan park that had been damaged by the flood.

The IsraAid team were impressed by the resilient community spirit, and appreciated Provost Hamish Vernal and the Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council Jim Savege thanking them personally for their assistance. Debby Taylor of the Aberdeen Jewish Community also met the volunteers and made them welcome.

Provost Hamish Vernal said: *"It is at times like these we really see how people pull together, and I know that a great deal of effort has taken place to provide support to people affected by flooding."*

TOP CLOCKWISE:  
LORD PROVOST  
WITH ISRAELI  
VOLUNTEERS AT  
WORK; IsraAID  
VOLUNTEERS WITH  
LORD PROVOST  
AND DEBBY TAYLOR  
OUTSIDE SCHOOL  
HOUSE IN BALLATER;  
MICKEY NOAM-  
ALON OF IsraAID  
CLEARS RUINED  
FURNITURE FROM  
FLOOD-DAMAGED  
PROPERTY.



## Solidarity Sunday

MARK TAYLOR,  
PRESIDENT, ABERDEEN HEBREW CONGREGATION

On Sunday 22 November 2015, over 300 people from many walks of life and from diverse faith communities and none, gathered at St Andrew's Cathedral in Aberdeen to observe Solidarity Sunday. There was music from around the world, food provided by the Syrian families in Aberdeen, and a deep sense of bond between people, hoping and praying for a better world, in the face of violence in Paris, Mali, and other parts of the world.

The idea for a Solidarity Sunday began when representatives of the Jewish Community, the Episcopal Church, and a local mosque came together in the summer to reflect on the theme of 'God as light'. To follow this, the Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation proposed a joint celebration of Mitzvah Day, an idea enthusiastically endorsed by the Trustees of St Andrew's Cathedral.

Unfortunately, only days before the event, came the atrocities in Paris and Mali. The Islamic community felt that their voice was drowned out by the clamour of a handful of militants who claim to be Muslims, and wanted to express their solidarity with the victims. So a candlelit procession was planned, from St Andrew's Cathedral to the nearby Castlegate. On the evening of Mitzvah Day, which was also a Christian festival, the leaders of the local Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities with around 70 people, young and old, from various faith communities walked the length of King Street of Aberdeen, side by side singing, *This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine*. The ceremony in the Cathedral included readings from the Torah, the New Testament, and the Koran, poetry, and outstanding music.

TOP TO BOTTOM: SOLIDARITY SUNDAY MULTIFAITH  
PROCESSION; "THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE";  
MUSICIANS IN ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL.

# ESTHER'S COURAGE TO SAY "See Me!"

EMILY MICHELSON

Esther's brave entrance into Ahasueros's throne room is, for me, the most vivid and dramatic moment of the Purim story. It allows for numerous interpretations: a literary critic might see this episode as the bookend to Vashti's earlier refusal; a feminist analysis might note that Esther enters a male space without seeking permission. Other readers will find further interpretations.

I see something else: When Esther approaches the king he looks at her as if for the first time. Megillat Esther 5:2 tells us, "And so it was, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she found favour in his sight." Up until that moment, Ahasueros had only loved Esther in the context of his other women: "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she had grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." (2:17).

But in that moment in his throne room, he sees her as an individual, and appreciates her on her own. In contrast, Haman has a comparable moment: he sees Mordecai stand up to him, and it makes him angry. To him, Mordecai represents only the nation he seeks to destroy: "And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not kneel or bow down to him, that made Haman full of rage. But he thought it beneath him only to lay hands on Mordecai, because he had been told Mordecai's nationality; so Haman sought to destroy all the Jews – the people of Mordecai – throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasueros." (3:5-6). Haman's anger comes because he cannot see Mordecai as one Jewish individual.

This tension between 'the Jews', as a category in the minds of others, and the experiences of individual living Jews, runs throughout history. Treating Jews as only a category has led to dehumanising violence at many moments. It lies at the centre of my own current research: I study forced conversionary sermons to Jews in Rome in the 16th and 17th centuries. Part of my concern is to ask how those preachers thought about their Jewish audience. Did they see individuals whom they knew and interacted with, or did they see only a people, an indistinguishable category? How, in turn, did those assumptions affect their actions, and their attempt to convert Jews?

Haman, as we know, had no interest in converting Jews; nor did Ahasueros care to convert Esther. What Ahasueros managed to do, however, was see Esther as an individual, from the moment in his throne room onwards. I suggest that it is precisely this moment of clear vision that allows Ahasueros, later in the story, to understand his wife's people in human terms, and so to save them.

## Interfaith Week

The theme of this year's Scottish Interfaith Week in November was 'Care for the Environment', and SCoJeC was delighted to participate in a number of activities to highlight Jewish teachings about the natural world and humanity's obligation to care for it.

The week began with a formal launch event at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, at which representatives of all of Scotland's major faith communities presented a joint declaration to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change, and Land Reform, Aileen McLeod, who was about to leave for Paris to represent Scotland at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference. The declaration called on people of faith in Scotland to learn more and to be guided by their faith to take action on climate change, and urged the participants in the Paris talks to agree as ambitious a programme as possible to mitigate the effects of climate change, especially on the poorest communities throughout the world.

During the week SCoJeC speakers also presented sessions on "Jewish Stewardship of the Environment" in Inverness and Dumfries.

FROM TOP: THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ISRAEL TEAM MEETS SCoJEC IN GALILEE; MARTIN JOHNSTONE, SECRETARY OF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND WITH SCoJEC DIRECTOR EPHRAIM BOROWSKI AND OTHERS; INTERFAITH DELEGATION HANDING OVER CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION TO MINISTER AT ARTHUR'S SEAT.



# First Minister Meets JEWISH STUDENTS

As she had promised SCoJeC last summer, the First Minister held a round-table discussion at the Scottish Parliament in January with a representative group of Jewish students, including some Israelis. The Jewish student Chaplain, Rabbi Yossi Bodeheim, also attended, along with representatives of SCoJeC and Jewish Student Chaplaincy Scotland.



The students told the First Minister about their concern that university authorities and others seem to find antisemitism easier to dismiss than other forms of hate crime, and suggested that this is because many perpetrators claim political justification for their actions. As a result they are not given the support that has in the past been offered to other minority groups on campus, for example, when global events impact on the student community. They also said that there is a lack of space on campuses for cultural discussions about Israel and related issues.

Following the meeting, the First Minister said:

*"It was a pleasure to meet with Jewish and Israeli students and hear about their experiences of studying in Scotland. We are committed to creating and supporting safer and stronger communities in which we all take responsibility for our actions and how they affect others."*

*"In the 21st century there is no place for antisemitism or racism. This Government respects the principle of academic freedom and the right of institutions to make their own decisions. We are clear, however, that citing academic freedom does not provide a free pass to act without regards to the law and we condemn any discrimination or intolerance based on religious or cultural affiliation."*

*"We are committed to working with Scottish universities to ensure that every student has a positive experience while studying in Scotland and enjoys every opportunity to fulfil their potential."*



RIGHT: THE FIRST MINISTER WITH STUDENT CHAPLAIN, RABBI YOSSEI BODENHEIM.



## Ministers Pledge ZERO TOLERANCE

reports that two of the terrorists' targets in Paris were Jewish owned, and explained that, as with the attacks on Jewish targets in Paris and Copenhagen earlier in the year, Jewish people in Scotland identify with the targets, and so they also have an impact on the Jewish community in Scotland. People throughout Scotland had told us that they feel scared to attend publicly advertised Jewish events.

We were able to assure the Minister that Police Scotland is engaging effectively with the Community, and he reiterated that there is zero tolerance of hate crime in Scotland – the Community should be alert but not alarmed, and feel free to raise any concerns.

In December, the Lord Advocate, Frank Mulholland QC, wrote to SCoJeC to update us on the outcomes of recent prosecutions for antisemitic behaviour. During the third quarter of 2014, when there were more antisemitic incidents in six weeks than the whole of the previous two years, the First Minister (then Alex Salmond), the Lord Advocate, and the Chief Constable had all assured us of their intention to bring the full force of the law down on perpetrators.

The Lord Advocate's recent update reveals just how successful that policy has been. There have been eight successful prosecutions during the year for antisemitic abuse on social media, and neo-Nazi activity, as well as harassment related to the Gaza war, and these have resulted in prison sentences, fines, compensation orders, and orders to be of good behaviour.

Full details are at [www.scojec.org/news/2015/15xii\\_hate\\_crime/prosecutions.html](http://www.scojec.org/news/2015/15xii_hate_crime/prosecutions.html)

Immediately after November's horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, the Justice Secretary, Michael Matheson MSP, contacted SCoJeC to invite us to meet him. He said that the First Minister had asked him to reiterate the Scottish Government's support for the Jewish Community, and to reassure us of Ministers' concern for our security.

Mr Matheson said that the situation had been changed by the events of the previous few days, and asked what support the Community needs, and what the Government could do to be seen to be more supportive.

We drew his attention to media



# Chanukah

## LIGHTS UP SCOTLAND

SCOJeC's Highlands and Islands volunteer ambassador, Linda Martin, and our Education and Community Development officer, Zoe Jacobs, lit Chanukah candles far more than eight times this year!

In a trip combining educational visits and Chanukah parties, Zoe and Linda set out from Dunblane, holding eight educational sessions with primary school children over two days, that included candle lighting, do'nuts and latkes. They moved on to a Chanukah party in Alloa Town Hall that brought some isolated Jewish people together for the first time. A successful game of dreidel meant the youngest guest won a hoard of chocolate Chanukah Gelt, while the adults discussed the Scottish Government's Fairer Scotland proposals. Other venues included two primary schools near Fort William, and a Chanukah party in Lochaber.

During the week, the community in Inverness also held a Chanukah celebration, with guests from as far afield as Gairloch and Findhorn enjoying the latkes, do'nuts, and other Chanukah goodies that Fiona Frank, SCOJeC's Projects and Outreach manager, had arranged for them, and we were also delighted to support the Israelis in Scotland group's well-attended post-Chanukah party.

In Dundee, a record number of members of the Tayside and Fife Jewish community came to the join the party. SCOJeC arranged for Glasgow-based Israeli artist Roi Carmeli to lead a Chanukah-themed lino-cutting workshop, showing the party-goers how to make prints of chanukiot, dreidels, and jugs of oil.

There were three public candle-lighting ceremonies in Edinburgh: in St Andrews Square, at the City Chambers, where the Lord Provost also hosted a reception, and at the Scottish Parliament where the Presiding Officer acted as host and lit a candle.

Meanwhile the First Minister joined Glasgow's communal Chanukah celebration at Calderwood Lodge Primary School where she lit a candle. This participation in the life of the Community is, as she promised when she met SCOJeC last summer, an active demonstration of the support of the Scottish Government for the Community.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CROWNED GIRL AND MASSED CHANUKIAHS AT EDINBURGH SYNAGOGUE; SUKKAT SHALOM EDINBURGH WITH PINYATA; CHILDREN AT THE ISRAELI POST-CHANUKAH PARTY; FIRST MINISTER LIGHTS THE EIGHTH CANDLE AT CALDERWOOD LODGE WITH RABBI RUBIN LOOKING ON; CHANUKAH CANDLE LIGHTING AT EDINBURGH SYNAGOGUE'S SERVICE; ENTHRALLED BY THE CHANUKAH LIGHTS, ALLOA.



## Tu b'Shevat IN LOCHABER

SCOJeC Outreach Worker, Linda Martin, hosted a small party to celebrate Tu b'Shevat, at her home in Lochaber on the Morvern Peninsula.

Despite the remote venue, seven people undertook the long journey from the mainland to take part. Two trees were planted, a copper beech and a small-leaved lime, and the children also learned how to take willow cuttings and plant them to form a willow hedge.

Lunch was provided for the hungry workers after the first tree was planted, to celebrate the mitzvah and to thank them for their sterling efforts.

One of the participants, Wendy Lev, said, "Although we celebrate the major festivals, Tu b'Shevat is one which has passed us by until now. The children are delighted to learn about it, and have the opportunity to get involved in planting trees."



## New Programmes FOR JEWISH YOUNG PEOPLE

MICHAEL CLERCK, JLGB

Thanks to funding from the UK Government Social Action Fund, JLGB is developing new programmes in Scotland, and has appointed a new fieldworker to engage with children and their families throughout the country.

JLGB has been running activities for Jewish teenagers for over 120 years, enabling them to improve their personal and social skills, recognising their achievements, and empowering them to make a positive contribution in their local communities.

It delivers national awards for various age-groups from 8 to 25, and is the only national Jewish provider of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, offering kosher and Shabbat-friendly expeditions. JLGB summer and winter camps, and Israel tours provide an excellent opportunity to network and make friends with hundreds of Jewish young people from across the UK, Israel, Europe, and Russia.

All JLGB activities are highly subsidised, with additional funding for communities in Scotland, as well as bursaries for families in financial need.

For more information, or to arrange a visit to your community, please contact:

Michael Clerck  
0141 569 7487  
Scotland@jlgb.org

and see the JLGB website for information about their full range of programmes:  
[www.jlgb.org](http://www.jlgb.org)



# A Jewish Manifesto FOR THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

In advance of the Scottish elections on 5 May, SCoJeC, with the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council and the Board of Deputies, has put together a 'Manifesto' to inform candidates about the interests and concerns of the Jewish Community.

After consultation, we have identified a number of 'asks' for politicians to consider relating to matters that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Government, and we have grouped these under the following "Ten Commitments" that we ask politicians to make.

The complete document can be read on our website at [www.scojec.org/manifesto\\_2016.pdf](http://www.scojec.org/manifesto_2016.pdf)



## The "Ten Commitments"

- 1 **Promoting respect for religious observance.**
- 2 **Promoting good relations, understanding, and cooperation between all of Scotland's communities, and actively supporting projects that bring them together.**
- 3 **Opposing all forms of hate crime, and in particular racism and religious hatred, including antisemitism, sectarianism, and anti-Muslim hatred.**
- 4 **Promoting and enhancing community safety, both by supporting initiatives that foster resilience, and by funding appropriate security measures.**
- 5 **Recognising that not all 'communities' are geographical neighbourhoods, that census statistics can be misleading, and that minority communities can, therefore, be invisible at the local level, so that adequate support for communities requires a combination of national and local networks and initiatives.**
- 6 **Ensuring that health, welfare, education, and other services are fully equipped to provide appropriate support for people of all religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.**
- 7 **Supporting the provision of religiously and culturally specific community support services for those who would like to live and be cared for in such an environment.**
- 8 **Recognising that 'Getting it Right for Every Child' requires respect for young people's identities as developing members of their own faith or cultural community.**
- 9 **Supporting education about the Holocaust, and refuting and confronting those who seek to deny, minimise, or downplay the Holocaust.**
- 10 **Acting responsibly when making statements concerning the Middle East, including about the Arab-Israeli conflict.**

## SCoJeC at Limmud

SCoJeC was represented at national Limmud in Birmingham in December on a panel to discuss "What does Devolution for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland really mean for the Jewish Community". Chaired by Gillian Merron, CEO of the Board of Deputies (BoD), the panel consisted of Micheline Brannan, Vice-Chair of SCoJeC, Cardiff-based BoD Vice-President, Sheila Gewolb, and Steven Jaffe of the Belfast Jewish Community.

Micheline described how SCoJeC had been set up in 1999 in response to the establishment of a new Scottish Parliament to provide a democratic representative body for Jewish people throughout Scotland, and how it responds to a wide range of issues, and builds effective relationships with Scottish politicians from all parties. There was a lively discussion comparing politics in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, and, among the Sassenachs, a great deal of interest in whether another 'IndyRef' was likely.

Gillian Merron concluded the discussion by thanking everyone very much for their participation and she hoped that she would see more of SCoJeC in future.

L TO R: STEVEN JAFFE, SHEILA GEWOLB, GILLIAN MERRON, MICHELINE BRANNAN.



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