

FOUR CORNERS

Creative THURSDAYS

Building on the success of our online Scottish Jewish Art Club, SCoJeC has launched a series of 'Creative Thursday' events featuring a variety of creative arts – drawing, baking, textiles, and music.

Self-Portraits: Know Yourself

Artist Randy Klinger from Findhorn spoke about his career, and led a guided workshop on sketching self-portraits. He advised participants to use two angled mirrors so that they could concentrate on parts of their body they weren't used to looking at! "I really enjoyed getting my eye and mind back into that drawing groove" said one participant who had previously taken a 'real life' art class with Randy, and was very pleased to be able to follow up with this online session.

The Art of Baking

Two of SCoJeC's talented local volunteers, Barb Taub from Arran and Linda Martin from the Highlands, led workshops on baking bagels and challah. Barb told us that she isn't really a baker but had to learn bagel-making "as self-defence when we arrived from the States about 10 years ago and discovered that what you're going to find in the UK isn't what a New Yorker would call a bagel!" Linda, who runs a kosher B&B in the Highlands, shared her 'slow-rise' challah recipe, as well as ideas for various styles of plaited and round challot.

Several participants were baking at home as they watched the session. "The cook-along presentations were both professional and personal," said one participant, "A really wonderful experience" enthused another.

You can watch a recording, bake along with Barb and Linda, and get the recipes at www.scojec.org/baking.html

Textiles and Jewish Life

Debby Taylor from Aberdeen opened this session with a description of her many creative home textile projects. She also showed us the mantles she had designed for the Torah scrolls in Aberdeen Synagogue after the originals were damaged by damp, and explained the motivation for the 'Lockdown Quilt' that she produced during the early days of the pandemic. Debby was followed by Malcolm Lochhead, textile artist and designer, and former Professor of Visual Design at Glasgow Caledonian University. He discussed the Giffnock Synagogue memorial *parochet* (curtain covering the Ark) with Marsha Gladstone who had commissioned it as a memorial to her son, Yoni Jesner, who was killed in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv 18 years ago. The session included a surprise livestream from the synagogue, where participants were shown the *parochet* in detail, and the beautiful Torah scrolls behind the curtain. We were also lucky enough to be able to meet some of the Glasgow-based embroiderers who worked on the project, and heard about the techniques they used, as well as the ideas behind the final design. Malcolm also spoke about other textile designs that he had worked on for religious settings during his extensive career, and he told us that the Giffnock *parochet* was his very favourite ecclesiastical project.

From Bernstein to Bob Dylan

Harpist Sophie Rocks from the west coast of Scotland, a soloist on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* programme and recipient of the 2018 United Kingdom Harp Association Award, performed a mix of classics from Hollywood and other classics. The concert included *The Notebook Theme* by Aaron Zigman, *Graceland* by Paul Simon, *Somewhere* by Leonard Bernstein, and *Wind Beneath my Wings* by Bette Midler.

Her moving performance was interspersed with fascinating anecdotes about the films the pieces came from, and she also explained the mechanism of the harp, which has two thousand moving parts. She said the harp is essentially an upright piano laid down in octaves, with the low strings down at the bottom, and the very high short strings at the top, and demonstrated the mechanics of the pedals and strings.

Participants commented: "Thank you so much for organising this lovely event", and "Sophie has been amazing and I greatly enjoyed the diverse set-list – there was definitely something for everyone!"

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Scottish Council
of Jewish
Communities

www.SCoJeC.org

REPRESENTING, CONNECTING, AND SUPPORTING
JEWISH PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND



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Tikkun Olam

The first meeting of SCoJeC's Scottish Jewish Climate Network brought together three rabbis from different traditions – Orthodox, Liberal, and Reform – to put care for the environment into a Jewish context, and to explain the Jewish imperative to keep the planet safe. As Rabbi Mark Goldsmith told us:

"If we are given the earth on which and by which to live, then we have to do that in a sustainable manner, so it can be given on from generation to generation. ...

Judaism lives from generation to generation. We are such a small people, and our history includes several attempts to put an end to us as a faith. So the Jewish mission, is expressed in a prayer recited traditionally three times per day, I'taken olam b'malchut shaddai – that we are God's partners in repairing the world.

We know the world is broken. Only sustainable development, by as many of the world's people working together as possible, gives us a hope to repair it, to become the world that God intended Adam, humanity, to steward."

Our second meeting transformed that principle into practical actions, as we considered what each of us can do at home to maintain and improve the environment for ourselves and others. Led by Ben McCallum (above) from the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, we discussed challenges that our green spaces currently face, such as a lack of food for insects and wild animals, and the serious decline in native Scottish plant species. Simply recycling old items as planters, setting up bird feeders, and establishing small ponds can provide significant help to the wildlife in our gardens.

As Rabbi Moshe Rubin said in the first meeting, *"When we focus our attention on how strong our relationship is with God, it's important to realise that part of that relationship is how we look after and respect God's planet."*

LEFT: RABBI MARK GOLDSMITH,
BELOW LEFT: RABBI MOSHE RUBIN,
BELOW RIGHT: RABBI MARK SOLOMON.



All in the Same Boat

As soon as we complete the annual cycle of readings from the Torah, we immediately begin again at the beginning – Genesis, the story of the creation, the very beginning. The following week we read the stories of Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel. All of these are stories that emphasise the common origin of humanity, and the fact that we are literally, not just metaphorically, all in the same boat.

There's a well-known parable that was first taught by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, one of the great sages of the Talmud and one of the founders of Kabbalah – not the stuff of pop stars and red ribbons, but the ancient Jewish mysticism that developed in the generation after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and tried to destroy Judaism too. He spoke about a group of people in a lifeboat: one of them took a drill and started to bore a hole under his seat; when the others frantically objected, he defended himself, "What's it to do with you? I'm only drilling under my own seat – I wouldn't dream of touching yours!"

The fallacy is obvious, and so is the moral. When I turn up the thermostat, I'm only drilling under my own seat. When I drive when I could take a bus, I'm only drilling under my own seat. When we cook more than we can eat, or dig up trees and don't replant, we're only drilling under our own seat.

There's another story in the Talmud about a rabbi of an even earlier generation, Choni haMe'agel, who saw an old man planting a carob tree. He asked, "How long will it be till this tree bears fruit?" When the old man replied, "Seventy years", Choni asked whether he really expected to be around to eat the fruit. The old man responded: "I found mature carob trees in the world because my ancestors planted them for me, and so I plant these for the good of my children."

So let's all stop drilling, and plant!

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY ON RADIO SCOTLAND, 27th OCTOBER 2020.
DELIVERED BY SCoJeC DIRECTOR EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

Lighting up Scotland

I'm writing this on bonfire night, having just returned from a loop around Thornliebank. I remember bonfire night last year, everyone crowded together in a field, watching the fireworks together. This year, as I stood alone on the ridge, looking out across the city, I could see fireworks displays popping up all across the skyline, like tiny little sparks coming out of the blackness.

A lot of things are different this year. We've celebrated Pesach, Shavuot, and the High Holidays separated from our community. Now that we come to Chanukah, it looks like things might not be any different. But even if it's not as it was last year, our Jewish traditions can bring so much meaning to our lives in the midst of the pandemic.

In September, we launched a programme called The Matana Club. Each month, a coalition of Jewish organisations and synagogues from across Scotland send out over 135 surprise packages (and counting!) to Jewish children from Aberdeen to Glasgow, Helensburgh to Perth, and everywhere in between. Each box contains recipes, ingredients, crafts, and activities to help celebrate upcoming Jewish holidays. Each month my kitchen table becomes an assembly line of dreidels or jars of honey, which are collected and delivered by our fabulous volunteer team.

For Chanukah, the children will be building their own Chanukiot, and we'll all join together to light them on Zoom. Former Giffnock Shul Chazzan and Holocaust survivor Ernest Levy wrote that "The difference between a single light and total darkness is tremendous". When you light one small flame, a whole dark room can be lit up by its fire. This Chanukah, 135 Jewish children across the country will be lighting their Chanukah candles with their families, creating little sparks of light popping up in the darkness.

Even though we may be celebrating Chanukah separated from our communities this year, for the first time Jewish children in Dunbar will be sharing in the Chanukah light with children in Cupar and Bathgate and Edinburgh and Pittenweem. Just like Glasgow on Bonfire Night, our community will be lit up, candle by candle, flame by flame, to share the warmth of our traditions with everyone.

Jewish children in nursery-P7 across Scotland can join the Matana Club for free at bit.ly/matanascotland.

Chanukah Sameach!

WINTER CALENDAR

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Chanukah | from evening Thu 10 Dec (1st candle after dark) to Fri 18 Dec (8 candles after dark on Thurs 17 Dec) |
| Fast of Tevet | Fri 25 Dec |
| Tu b'Shevat | Thu 28 Jan |
| Fast of Esther | Thu 25 Feb |
| Purim | Fri 26 Feb (Megillah readings will be on Thurs night and Fri morning) |
| Shushan Purim | Shabbat 27 Feb (Some customs observed on Fri and Sun) |

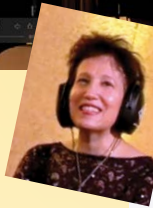
Music IN THE TIME OF Anne Frank

On the anniversary of the eve of the Nazi pogrom of Kristallnacht, SCoJeC organised a concert to bring to life the long-lost compositions of victims and survivors of the Nazis. Performed by Fulbright Scholar Dr Deborah Nemko of Bridgewater State University, this featured piano works by Daniel Belinfante and Fania Chapiro, two Dutch Jewish composers whose lives were forever changed by the Nazi invasion.

The event was also part of Interfaith Week and marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Referring to the young girl who changed the world through the diary she kept while in hiding in the "Secret Annex" in Amsterdam, Deborah said:

It is hard not to be inspired by courage and wisdom of a child named Anne Frank ... By performing and presenting piano compositions written around the time of the most famous young victim of the Holocaust, I hope to promote an understanding not only of the difficulties Jewish musicians composing, sometimes in hiding, but also the monumental spirit of Jews whose voices would not be stifled in the darkest of times.

The concert was live-streamed from the TELEFUNKEN Elektroakustik studios in Connecticut, USA, and was followed by the auction of Debby Taylor's hand-stitched 'Lockdown Quilt'. This was expertly presided over by Edward Green, and raised a further £200 for the Aberdeen Synagogue Roof Fund.



Antisemitism IN THE Labour Party

Following the publication of the investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into antisemitism in the Labour Party, which found the Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership to be responsible for unlawful harassment and discrimination against Jewish people, the new Leader, Sir Keir Starmer, responded by saying it had brought "a day of shame" for the Party, and committed to implementing the report's recommendations in full. Commenting on Jeremy Corbyn's subsequent suspension, Richard Leonard, the Scottish Leader, said that "Corbyn is a life-long antiracist". SCoJeC and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council issued the following joint statement:

The findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission investigation are damning and a conclusive demonstration of antisemitism in the Labour party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Not only did the Labour party fail, at the highest level, to stamp out anti-Jewish racism, but the leadership actively intervened to stop this issue from being dealt with.

For years now, the Jewish community in Scotland and across the UK has made efforts to engage with and work with the Labour party - to no avail. Our community has fought against racism while facing an ongoing denial of antisemitism in the Labour party. Jeremy Corbyn's response to the findings continues to be a denial and minimisation of Labour antisemitism under his leadership, and we therefore are saddened that the leader of Scottish Labour has responded on what the UK leader has openly admitted to be "this day of shame for Labour" by merely repeating that "Corbyn is a lifelong anti-racist campaigner". The issue is not what he claims to be, but what he did - and failed to do - and his actions and inactions speak for themselves, as the investigation by the independent Equality and Human Rights Commission has exposed in painful detail.

We welcome Keir Starmer's supportive and honest comments, and hope that he is able to take on the task of tackling antisemitism and rebuilding trust with the community, and we find it literally beyond belief that there are still senior members of the Labour Party who remain in denial despite the findings of the UK Equality and Human Rights watchdog.

We call on Scottish Labour and its leadership to confirm that they accept the EHRC findings and to press for immediate and decisive action to deal with antisemitism.

The Slave Trade IN GLASGOW

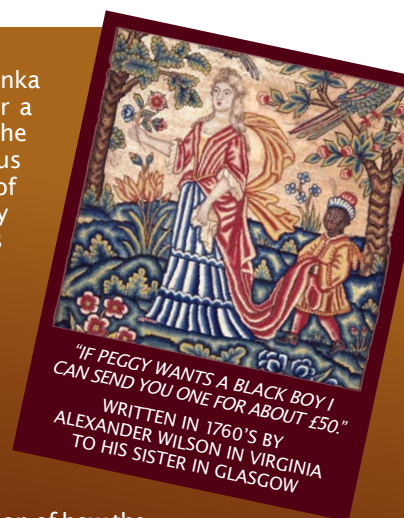
The past year has focussed public attention on the role of the global slave trade in the development of many of Britain's major cities, not least Glasgow, the "second city of the Empire", and SCoJeC held an event to explore this and discuss historical Jewish attitudes to slavery.

Our seminar on Glasgow's links with the slave trade was led by the vastly knowledgeable Marenka Thompson-Odlum, a Research Associate at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, whose research for a doctorate at the University of Glasgow explores Glasgow's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. She has also used her knowledge to create a walking tour through Glasgow's slave history, and led us through a virtual walk, showing us images of iconic Glasgow sites, and delving into the history of the benefactor and how they amassed their wealth in the slave trade. While slavery was not a widely popular practice in Scotland itself, Scottish merchants were infamously known for their harsh practices as slave traders and exporters. Thompson-Odlum exposed these histories, as well as the rewriting of Glasgow's involvement to present Scottish merchants as having saved these 'tribal' peoples rather than admitting the harsh realities of the slave trade. She showed that as sentiments changed, these wealthy families began to distance themselves from their businesses, even going as far as to burn all their records of the trade in slaves.

"The trading instinct of Glasgow was not to be denied, and, prompted no doubt by its favourable situation for the purpose, the merchants of Glasgow embarked largely in the West India [West Indies] trade... The reproach can never be levelled at our city, as it was at Liverpool, that there was not a stone in her streets that were not cemented with the blood of a slave". (Glasgow Herald, 1 June 1883)

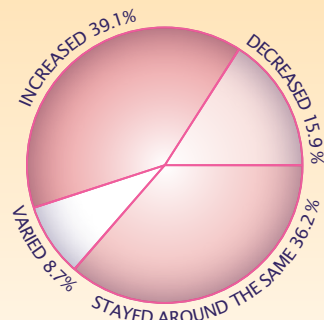
Bill Shackman, the Honorary Chaplain to Jewish students at Saint Andrews University, then led a discussion of how the Hebrew Bible contributed to the history of slavery, with texts being used both to justify slavery and to support liberation during the American Civil War. The narrative of the Exodus from Egypt has been used to support liberation movements throughout history, and he said it is not a surprise that the Torah has rules about the fair treatment of slaves. During the Civil War, rabbis were brought forward both to justify slavery in the South, and to condemn it in the North, while some tried to stand aside:

"Jews deem it their place to have everyone choose whichever side he may deem best to promote his own interest and the welfare of his country... They do not interfere in any discussion which is not material to their religion". (Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1853)



Keeping Community Connected

BEING JEWISH IN SCOTLAND DURING COVID



Has your participation in Jewish activities increased or decreased since lockdown began?

As we reported in the last issue of Four Corners, we carried out two small-scale surveys this year. The first, in January, was an update of our previous studies of people's experience of being Jewish in Scotland, and the second, in June, was a smaller survey of how that changed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several respondents to the January survey, especially those from outwith the central belt, told us that it was difficult to get together with other Jewish people, to access Jewish cultural events, and to travel to Jewish activities:

"Living outside the cities, it is difficult to practice Judaism. I am the only Jew in the area. I have to go into Edinburgh, ... I don't often get to the activities I would like." (F, 70s, RURAL)

"If I want progressive, diasporic, or pluralist Jewish activities, I have to travel to England or America ... I travel 2 hours to go to a Yiddish reading group." (NB, 30s, CENTRAL BELT)

"Not much fun stuff that is non religious but Jewish is happening." (F, 40s, RURAL)

"Not much in the way of Jewish educational opportunities for adults, or high quality speakers coming - although it does happen sometimes." (M, 60s, CENTRAL BELT)

Back in January, no-one would ever have thought that a global pandemic would result in precisely these issues being addressed, not only Scotland-wide but even world-wide, but that's exactly what has happened.

In June we asked people whether their participation in Jewish activities had increased or decreased since lockdown began, and respondents reported most commonly that their participation in Jewish activities had increased (39%), while only 16% said their participation had decreased. Overall 84% had increased or maintained their participation in this time.

Generally people put this down to ease of access of online events. The absence of geographical limitations enabled them to connect with community members world-wide. Although not everyone had jumped on the Zoom bandwagon, these responses were typical:

"We've probably come together more, and had more online interactions due to lockdown. Been able to focus more and have gathered more strength from our faith, traditions and community." (F, 40s)

"There have been remarkable connections zooming together from Glasgow, London, Israel, USA and meeting others from a variety of different communities." (NOT STATED)

"More likely to participate in Shabbat services during lockdown." (F, 60s, CENTRAL BELT)

"Attended many more events as not had to leave my house. Live a long way from most places and this has worked out really well." (NOT STATED)

"Mostly it has given me the time / space to engage more with Jewish life, which I generally don't do (mostly through lack of time, but also through introversion). ... having events that span the globe has been lovely. It feels like there is more, and more connection possible." (F, 60s, CENTRAL BELT)

"Was able to attend the funeral and Shiva of two overseas relatives which would have been impossible prior to Covid-19." (M, 60s, HIGHLANDS)

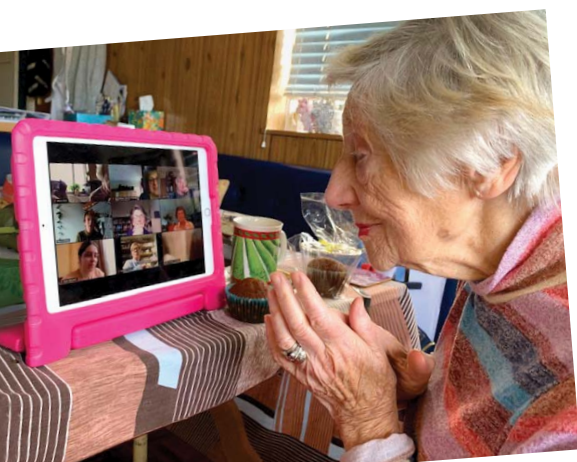
"It's been good connecting with other Jews in Scotland through SCoJeC zoom activities." (F, 60s, RURAL)

"Unable to go to shul services, but have been more involved with community activities delivering face masks, gloves, anti-bac gel etc." (M, 70s)

"I feel the Jewish Community has become much closer. Now ... I realise how important being a member of the Community can be." (F, 60s, CENTRAL BELT)

Of course this was not the full story, and some people found it hard to connect with Jewish life during lockdown:

"Attendance at services on Zoom as distinct from seminars feels artificial and restrictive of appropriate behaviours." (M, 60s, CENTRAL BELT)



SCoJeC is leading a partnership with several other Scottish communal organisations to help them continue to run hybrid activities - face to face events that are also filmed for an online audience - even after shuls and communal organisations are able to resume limited face to face activities, and we hope shortly to have news about a new project for after lockdown ends. For more information contact Ruby, 07779-206 522 ruby@scojec.org

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◆ Forthcoming Events: (PROVISIONAL)

SEE DETAILS OF WHATS ON

- ◆ Latke Making with Barb Taub
- ◆ SCoJeC Chanukah Party
- ◆ Capturing Eichmann with Avi Avraham
- ◆ Tu b'Shvat Tree Planting, East & West Coasts
- ◆ Jewish Comedy Night

www.scojec.org/events.html

◆ News:

SIGN UP FOR RSS NEWS FEEDS

www.scojec.org/rss/rss.xml

SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS, NEWSLETTERS, ETC

www.scojec.org/mailling-lists.html

◆ Coronavirus (Covid-19)

PANDEMIC INFO: COMMUNAL SUPPORT,

WELFARE SERVICES, ONLINE ACTIVITIES

www.scojec.org/lockdown.html

◆ SCoJeC is grateful for the generous support of:

- ◆ Glasgow Jewish Community Trust
- ◆ Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable Trust
- ◆ People's Postcode Trust
- ◆ TELEFUNKEN Elektroakustik for assistance with Music in the Time of Anne Frank

◆ SCoJeC needs your support! Help us to help your community:

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