



## Zoomin' on Purim AROUND SCOTLAND

## American Comedy for Purim

SCoJeC prepared for Purim this year by hosting an all-American comedy show with some of Chicago's best known Jewish comedians, connecting Jewish homes in Scotland with others in Europe, Israel, and the United States, through virtual laughter. Comedians (clockwise from top) Jessica Besser-Rosenberg, Katharine Herskovic, Joe Medoff, and Jeremy Drazner have never actually visited Scotland, but they rose to the challenge of zoom to convey their humour to communities they would never previously have been able to reach.

The show celebrated Judaism and Jewish tradition across borders with an audience from Glasgow to New York, and proved that despite our geographic differences we all like to laugh at the same Jewish oddities! Their jokes clearly resonated with the audience, poking fun at Jewish dating apps, Jewish origins, the dangerous practice of lifting the bride and groom on chairs at weddings, those famous Jewish heritage trips to Israel, and the custom of giving *gelt* on Chanukah.

Audience participation – and laughter – were welcomed, so with microphones unmuted all were free to join in and laugh in the face of the pandemic-enforced separation we have all endured for more than a year, and the performers very much appreciated being able to laugh together and support one another as they completed their set.



ISSUE 69 • SPRING 2021 • PESACH 5781



Scottish Council  
of Jewish  
Communities

[www.SCoJeC.org](http://www.SCoJeC.org)

REPRESENTING, CONNECTING, AND SUPPORTING  
JEWISH PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

## Hybrid Events Project

SCoJeC has been awarded a substantial grant for a project to develop and pilot hybrid events as the Jewish community emerges from lockdown.

The project will build on a silver lining we unexpectedly found in the dark cloud of the pandemic. When travel was suddenly prohibited, the first event we had to cancel would have been a success had 25 people attended, but we didn't cancel – we moved online and attracted an audience of 634! So we quickly learned that virtual events can overcome barriers of mobility, health, geography, and travel.

So we will be working in partnership with a wide range of communal organisations to provide training, equipment, and support for meetings and activities that combine a real-world with an online audience, and promote more equal access and wider participation.



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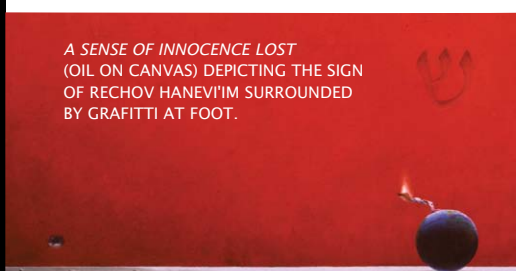
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# Frying in Florence!





# Celebrating Chanukah Together

*"It was a privilege to join a national online gathering of Scotland's Jewish communities to celebrate the start of Chanukah – A festival representing light in the darkness, resilience and hope. Never more than now has that felt so important. Best wishes to all celebrating @SCOJeC"*

AILEEN CAMPBELL MSP, COMMUNITIES SECRETARY

*"Of all the events I have been to in lockdown, this was the single most uplifting and inclusive event I have experienced"*

KIRSTEN OSWALD MP

*"It is so encouraging for those of us who are elderly – I'm 77 – to see so much enthusiasm and dedication in our young Jews! Long may you continue your vital work."*

*"The way in which Zoom brings together so many people from so many different places really is the silver lining of the cloud that is Covid!"*

On the first night of Chanukah, SCOJeC joined UJIA, the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and other Jewish communities and organisations across the whole of Scotland to celebrate Chanukah together online.

Fourteen organisations from across the country took part, and no fewer than 246 people logged in – many of them with their families – to watch as our candle lightings moved from the west to the east coasts of Scotland in this unique version of our annual Chanukah event. This event came about thanks to whole-hearted collaboration across organisations, and stands as a testament to the strength of our community in continuing to come together safely throughout the pandemic.

The event started with a recorded video message from the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, addressing the hardships of distancing from friends and loved ones during our festive celebrations, and including a message of hope for the future.

The evening continued with songs led by representatives of the various communities, a brief slideshow of Chanukah in Scotland through the years presented by Harvey Kaplan of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, a song from the Calderwood Lodge Primary School choir, candle-lighting by Rabbi Rose of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, and a Chanukah song in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English from Rabbi Mark Solomon of Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community.

To end our evening, we enjoyed a short harp performance by Charlotte Hecht, followed by an address from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Aileen Campbell, and the evening ended in the north-east with candle-lighting by Debby Taylor of Aberdeen Synagogue, a brief address from Aberdeen Lord Provost Barney Crockett, and candle-lighting by the Jewish Student Chaplain on behalf of Jewish students all around Scotland.



## Count-Up

TALYA SILVER

You'd think that the Torah would record the date of the anniversary of its own giving. But there's no *on the sixth day of the third month*; instead there's a riddle: *seven full weeks after the festival of matzot*. Instead of a date on the calendar we've got a countdown to the big event. Actually it's a countUP, because starting from the second evening of Pesach, every day we count one more day towards the giving of the Torah, starting from day one of the *Omer* all the way up until day 49. And it's not just an in-between period, it's got a name in its own right – the *Omer* – the *omer* being the Biblical measure of the volume of the barley offering brought in the Temple on the first day of the count.

This countUP period reminds me of another waiting period described in Torah – the seven years Ya'akov worked for Lavan in order to earn Rachel's hand in marriage, which *seemed in his eyes like a few days because of his love of her*. I would have thought that waiting seven years to marry the bride he fell in love with at first sight would have seemed endless! The commentators, however, say that Ya'akov valued Rachel so much that no amount of time would have seemed too long to work towards their marriage.

Every year at this season I look out of the windows of my house and watch the wheat growing and ripening in the fields opposite. Parallel to the natural world, the seven weeks of the *Omer* should be a maturing process for us as well. There is a Mishnah in *The Ethics of the Fathers* (*Pirkei Avot*, 6:6) that lists 48 ways that Torah can be acquired, including humility, patience, and happiness. Some people choose a different trait to focus on each day of the *Omer* with the aim that by the 49th day they will be truly ready to receive the Torah. (I always thought that seemed a great idea but never got round to doing it – maybe this year...)

The *Omer* teaches me two things. When I care about what I'm working towards, I value each step of the journey. I count up, not down. And for truly great goals, the destination doesn't have a separate identity, it's simply the culmination of the process and effort invested to achieve it.

## Festival Calendar

### PESACH:

*Search for chametz:* Thurs night 25 Mar

*Burning the chametz:* Fri morning 26 Mar

*First Seder:* Sat night 27 Mar (after end Shabbat)

*Second Seder:* Sun night 28 Mar

*Yom Tov:* Evening Sat 27 till night Mon 29 Mar

*Chol HaMoed (middle days) continue until ...*

*Yom Tov:* Evening Fri 2 Apr till night Sun 4 Apr

*Yom HaShoah:* Thurs night 8 Apr

*Yom haAtzma'ut:* Thurs 15 Apr

*LaG b'Omer:* Fri 30 Apr

### SHAVUOT:

*Yom Tov:* Evening Sun 16 May till night Tue 18 May



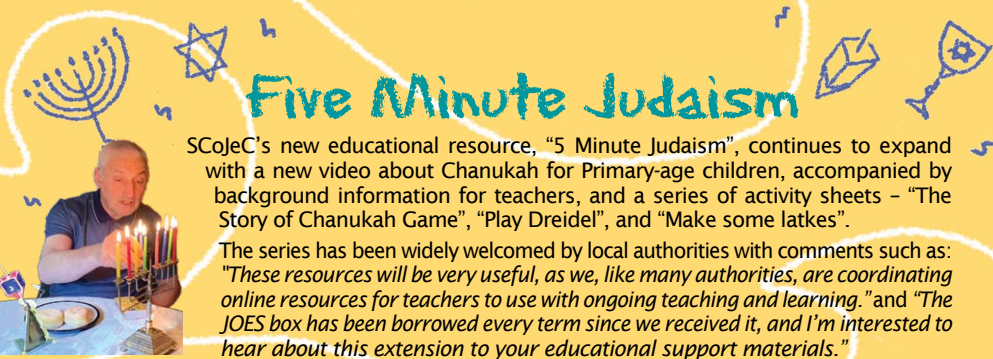
## The Burns Supper

Giffnock Shul's Annual event featured:

TOP (LEFT & RIGHT) JEREMY FREEDMAN'S RECITATIONS, NICOLA LIVINGSTON AS MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES, AND RABBI YOSSI BODENHEIM MAKING HAVDALAH.

BOTTOM: RABBI RUBIN TOASTING HIS DOUBLE, JACKSON CARLAW MSP, JOEL CONN TOASTING THE LASSIES, MARIE VAN DER ZYL, AND MARK COHEN ADDRESSING THE HAGGIS-WITH-A-HECHSHER.





## Five Minute Judaism

SCoJeC's new educational resource, "5 Minute Judaism", continues to expand with a new video about Chanukah for Primary-age children, accompanied by background information for teachers, and a series of activity sheets - "The Story of Chanukah Game", "Play Dreidel", and "Make some latkes".

The series has been widely welcomed by local authorities with comments such as: "These resources will be very useful, as we, like many authorities, are coordinating online resources for teachers to use with ongoing teaching and learning." and "The JOES box has been borrowed every term since we received it, and I'm interested to hear about this extension to your educational support materials."

Videos and accompanying resources about Shabbat, Kashrut, and Chanukah are available on our website, and SCoJeC's Volunteer Ambassadors are working on more Jewish festivals and life cycle events, so keep an eye on [www.scojec.org/5-minute-judaism.html](http://www.scojec.org/5-minute-judaism.html)

## Day of Tolerance

To mark Mitzvah Day in November, SCoJeC joined the Scottish Refugee Council, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, to hold a "Day of Tolerance" event focused on refugees in Scotland.



Sabine Chalmers, the Refugee Integration Co-ordinator for Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, outlined the situation of refugees globally and in Scotland - a situation that includes the hardships of leaving home, starting to settle within a new country, and attempting to integrate within a community that can feel quite hostile. Sabine then posed questions for us to consider: "What would you need to know or have if you were coming to a new country? What would you need to know or have to feel part of a community that you have just arrived in?"

These questions opened up a discussion for participants to reflect on what it would be like to be forced to move to a new country without a grasp of the language or other our accustomed means and comforts.



Graham O'Neill, Policy Officer of the Scottish Refugee Council, then turned our attention to Glasgow as a welcoming city for asylum seekers, walked us through the key legal provisions that

implement the human rights that protect refugees, and outlined what is needed to support these individuals and families. He asked us to consider what support is needed for integration, how to overcome challenges to integration and what is the role of the host community to help bridge gaps. We discussed the dreams we have for our community, our ideals to welcome, include, support, and empower refugees, and what practical steps are needed for this to become a reality.



## Holocaust Memorial Day

Lev Atlas, Principal Viola of the Scottish Opera Orchestra, performed a new composition based on Gypsy folk music, at the Roma memorial in Queens Park in Glasgow.

## "Get Vaccinated!"

[www.scojec.org/get-vaccinated.html](http://www.scojec.org/get-vaccinated.html)

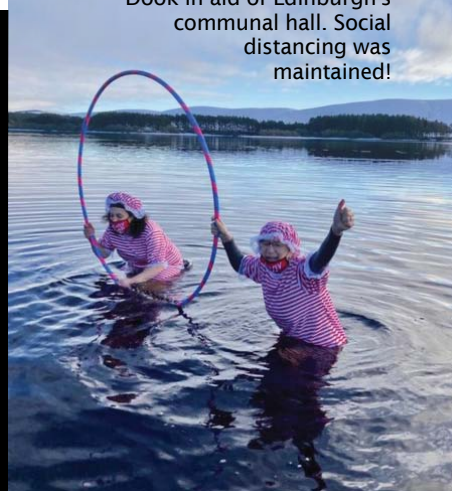


Rabbi Moshe Rubin of Giffnock Synagogue in Glasgow joined faith leaders representing the Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Scottish Muslim, Baha'i, and Sikh communities, in issuing a statement and video urging people to "Get Vaccinated!" against Covid-19.

"We faith leaders in Scotland understand the difficulty that our communities are facing during this pandemic. We urge all faith communities to take measures that will ensure their safety and the safety of others. We support the Covid vaccination programme across the community, and we encourage people to be vaccinated so that they keep themselves and their neighbours safe."

## Loonies dook it again!

Carol Levstein and Sara Lurie braved the freezing water of the Firth of Forth (and the snow on the beach) at Gladhouse, Midlothian for this year's Loonie Dook in aid of Edinburgh's communal hall. Social distancing was maintained!



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- ◆ **Forthcoming Events:** (PROVISIONAL)
- ◆ Baking Bread Together with Interfaith Glasgow
- ◆ COP26 Information Session
- ◆ Friday Night Dinner with Interfaith Glasgow
- ◆ Shavuot with the Matana Club
- ◆ Panel on Organ Donation
- ◆ Tree Planting with Interfaith Glasgow
- ◆ [www.scojec.org/events.html](http://www.scojec.org/events.html)

- ◆ **News:**
- ◆ SIGN UP FOR RSS NEWS FEEDS  
[www.scojec.org/rss/rss.xml](http://www.scojec.org/rss/rss.xml)
- ◆ SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS, NEWSLETTERS, ETC  
[www.scojec.org/mailling-lists.html](http://www.scojec.org/mailling-lists.html)

- ◆ **Coronavirus** (Covid-19)
- ◆ PANDEMIC INFORMATION: COMMUNAL SUPPORT, WELFARE SERVICES, ONLINE ACTIVITIES  
[www.scojec.org/lockdown.html](http://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
- ◆ Stuart Duffin RSA for reproduction of *A Sense of Innocence Lost* © (detail, p.2)
- ◆ Interfaith Scotland for portrait of Lev Atlas (p.4)

- ◆ **SCoJeC needs your support! Help us to help your community:**
- ◆ DONATE AT [www.scojec.org/donate.html](http://www.scojec.org/donate.html)
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