

🇬🇧 | Scottish Government
New Year Message
FROM THE FIRST MINISTER

FIRST MINISTER HUMZA YOUSAF MSP, PICTURED BELOW IN CONVERSATION WITH RABBI MOSHE RUBIN ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO GIFFNOCK NEWTON MEARNS SHUL (SEE REPORT ON PAGE 4).

I want to send my warmest wishes to our Jewish community both here in Scotland and around the world as celebrations commence for Rosh Hashanah. The special season of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur shines a light on the deeply valuable role Scotland's Jewish communities play in our country's civic life.

I have long been a friend of Scotland's Jewish community - and the Scottish Government continues to value greatly our close and enduring relationship with SCoJeC, as well as the community it represents.

I have been particularly interested to hear SCoJeC reflect on the increasing numbers of Jewish students who have chosen Scotland as their place of study, and appreciate the benefits of continued attraction and retention of such students to Scotland. I look forward to engaging with and supporting our growing Jewish student community however I can.

Whilst Jewish New Year is undoubtedly a time for celebration, it's also important to reflect on ongoing concerns with respect to the threat of antisemitism. Earlier this year, the Scottish Government published our new Hate Crime Strategy which was in part formed by engagement with Jewish organisations. I reaffirm my absolute commitment to achieving our collective vision for a Scotland where everyone can live free from hatred and prejudice, and where our communities are empowered, inclusive and safe.

I wish you all the best for a prosperous year ahead. On behalf of the Scottish Government, *Shanah Tovah!*



A capacity crowd flocked from around Scotland to Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation for their long-established Festival Open Day held jointly with the Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre and compered by David Ian Neville and Adrian Harris.

AMONGST THE ACTS FEATURED WERE (FROM TOP, L TO R)

- ◆ OUT OF THE FOREST THEATRE, *THE BRIEF LIFE AND MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF BORIS III, KING OF BULGARIA.*
- ◆ DANIEL CAINER, *MORE JEWISH CHRONICLES.*
- ◆ CHRISTOPHER C GIBBS, *WIESENTHAL.*
- ◆ RACHEL CREEGER, *ULTIMATE JEWISH MOTHER.*
- ◆ DAVID THILL, *EXIT 20:20.*
- ◆ EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY KLEZMER BAND LED BY PHIL ALEXANDER.
- ◆ NAOMI PAUL, *THEY MAY HAVE EVEN EATEN HAM.*
- ◆ DEB FILLER, *KRAVITZ, COHEN, BERNSTEIN, AND ME.*
- ◆ AVITAL ASH, *WORKSHOP FOR A SUICIDE NOTE.*
- ◆ LOTTIE WALKER, *CHOPPED LIVER AND UNIONS.*
- ◆ BEN ARRON, *LOSER.*

(RIGHT) THE AUDIENCE ALSO ENJOYED A VERY SOCIABLE BAGEL LUNCH



Student Shabbaton

More than 80 Scottish Jewish students attended a Shabbaton in Aberfoyle, led by Chaplains Eliran and Ayalah Shabo (left) and Aharon and Hodaya Lemberger (right).



SHANAH TOVAH! שנה טובה!
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Scottish Council
 of Jewish
 Communities

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 JEWISH PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND



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Faith Community Reception AT EDINBURGH CASTLE

Several members of the Jewish Community were honoured to be invited to the First Minister's reception at Edinburgh Castle for leaders of Scotland's faith communities from across Scotland, including representatives from SCoJeC, the Glasgow Rep Council, the Edinburgh Orthodox and Liberal Communities, Glasgow's Giffnock Newton Mearns and Garnethill Synagogues, and both student Chaplaincy couples.

First Minister Humza Yousaf spoke of the huge contribution that faith communities make to society, and the Scottish Government's new strategy to strengthen engagement with communities across government policy. He particularly acknowledged the role of faith communities and their leaders in helping Scotland through the effects of the pandemic, and in promoting community harmony and good relations.

As a practicing Muslim, he asked members of all faiths to pray for him as First Minister, and for politicians of all persuasions who aim to improve the lot of the people of Scotland and often have to make personal sacrifices to do so.

BOOST FOR Jewish-Kirk Relations



SCoJeC warmly welcomes the Church of Scotland General Assembly's adoption of a ground-breaking Jewish-Christian Glossary that compares Jewish and Christian understandings of key terms such as "chosen people", "covenant", and "Israel".

Exactly ten years after the rift caused by the Kirk's publication of *The Inheritance of Abraham?*, a document that many regarded as antisemitic, the 2023 Assembly gave the Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, a prolonged standing ovation when he spoke about the "sacred journey together ... a brave journey, a wonderful journey" that had led to the compilation of the Glossary by a group of Orthodox Rabbis and Kirk ministers. "Rather than 'Let's concentrate on what we share in common', we concentrated on what divides us: the elephant in the room ... that led to the nadir in our relationship. This is what we call *machloket l'shem shamayim*, dispute for the sake of Heaven; we tackle the ball, not the person, respect the other person, and tackle and engage with issues with warmth and friendship."

The Kirk Moderator, the Rt Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, who ironically had presided over the preparation of the 2013 document, responded, "Chief Rabbi, friend. I have rarely if ever heard such inspiring words. Friendship is a blessing without measure. We crave your blessings and prayers, and assure you of ours", adding that the Glossary was an "empowering, challenging, path to dialogue - choosing new ways to bring ourselves closer, to sit side by side, to discuss not only what unites us but engage honestly with what potentially divides."

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski commented, "*We must all hope and pray that this new document sees the beginning of a new relationship of friendship and understanding between our two faith communities in Scotland. It was good to see in particular the recognition in the Glossary of 'unconscious supersessionism within mainstream Christian understandings', and the frank acknowledgement that the 2013 document was 'a direct example of supersessionist thinking'. The challenge now is to build on this new foundation.*"



Scotland Honours the King

The Jewish Community was honoured to participate in the National Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication at St Giles' Cathedral, when 'the Honours of Scotland' - the Scottish Crown Jewels - were presented to King Charles III, who was accompanied by Queen Camilla and the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay.

The service was led by the minister of St Giles', and the Dean of the Chapel Royal and of the Order of the Thistle. The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland gave the sermon, and leaders of other faith communities bestowed their blessings on the new King, including the Senior Rabbi in Scotland, Rabbi Moshe Rubin of Giffnock Newton Mearns Synagogue.

Rabbi Rubin commented, "*The inclusion of all faiths and those of no faith in the service was a reflection of the King's hard work in reaching out to all people, and reflected very much the multi-faith society the UK has become. The service was very moving but the key moment for me was when the King placed his hands on the crown, pledging his service and entrusting himself to reign as our King in the service of all his people. It felt like a moment of history being carried out with so much humility and modesty. In a time when so many of our traditions are being eroded and challenged, it was incredible to see how the ancient rituals of the service weaved their way and resonated with our modern times and culture.*"

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski, who was also invited to the ceremony, added, "*This was an historic event in every sense of the word - the ancient Stone of Destiny, a 15th century sceptre and a 16th century crown in a 12th century church, to honour a monarch in a modern adaptation of a time-honoured ritual with its origins in Biblical Jewish tradition.*

To see a Muslim First Minister read from the Hebrew Bible, and the leaders of so many faith communities take leading roles in the very home of John Knox's Presbyterianism, really did epitomise how the new Scotland sees itself - diverse, inclusive, and welcoming. It was an honour and a privilege to be part of it."



Repentance, Harvest, and Inner Peace

RABBI ELIRAN SHABO

Throughout the year, there are precious few times when all facets of a person's life converge into a single, momentous day. For Jewish people, these are the *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe, culminating in Yom Kippur. However, the holidays of Tishrei truly come to an end on Sukkot.

Throughout history, humankind has devoted itself to the pursuit of sustenance and the cultivation of the land. Life is intertwined with the cycles of the agricultural year, a rhythm mirrored by the Jewish calendar. At the advent of spring, Pesach coincides with the nascent growth of grains – rebirth and rejuvenation, symbolising both the Exodus from Egypt and the forging of a distinct people. As summer dawns, Shavuot, the Festival of Harvest, also celebrates the receiving of the Torah, the spiritual harvest of the Jewish nation. As autumn arrives, Sukkot serves as a valediction to the agricultural cycle, the culmination of the year's toil. Grains are harvested, and will tide the community over winter until the next season's yield. Notably, Sukkot is referred to as *Chag*, the festival, as these days are imbued with jubilation over the new harvest and its promise of nourishment.

However, the euphoria of these closing days of Tishrei derives not only from the freshly harvested grain but also from the closure of a more personal, and profoundly human cycle – cycle of repentance. From the beginning of Elul, a month synonymous with pardon and atonement, this introspective journey spans from Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, through the ten Days of Awe and Yom Kippur, only to actually culminate in the celebration of Sukkot. Throughout these days, people introspectively examine their deeds, seek forgiveness from those they have wronged, and endeavour to mend their ways. This process of reconciliation, atonement, and penance envelops the mind and pervades the heart, eventually blossoming into the profound joy of inner peace.

Yet, this often appears remote and elusive. One need only inquire of a student mired in exams, parents of children during summer holidays, or even grandparents yearning for a tranquil moment! However, if each of us can find, during the months of Elul and Tishrei, time for both forgiveness and celebration of our material and spiritual triumphs, and can cherish what we have, then we shall truly grasp the essence of holiday joy. Together with our families and communities, we heed the Torah injunction to celebrate. Through this, divine blessings flow, raising our happiness to even greater heights.

Reflection Time

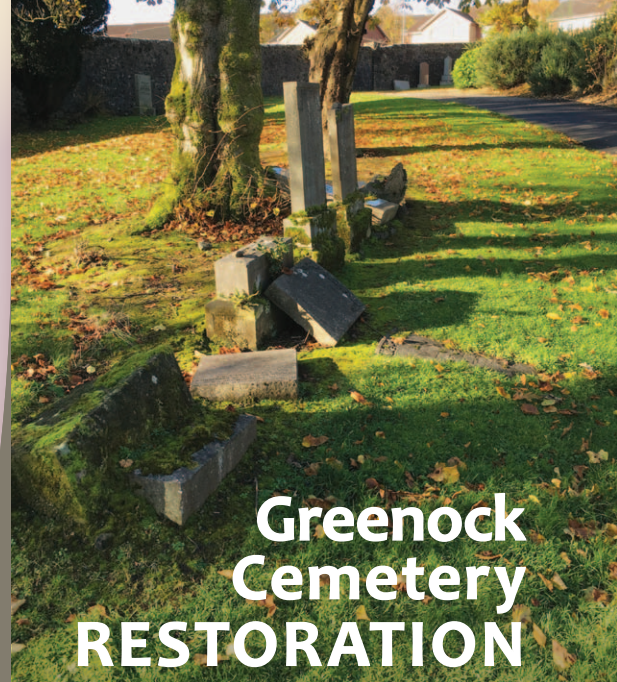
In his final month as Assistant Rabbi of Giffnock Newton Mearns Synagogue and Chaplain to Jewish Students in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, Rabbi Aharon Lemberger was invited to lead Time for Reflection in the Scottish Parliament.

Welcome to Demi!

SCOJeC is delighted to welcome Demi Franks as our new Community Engagement and Events Manager. Originally from Manchester, Demi graduated from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and has worked in theatre and as Creative Producer at Manchester Jewish Museum. Her experience and enthusiasm for creating events to connect communities aligns perfectly with SCOJeC's objectives of representing, connecting and supporting Jewish people throughout Scotland.

★ Festival Calendar 5784

Rosh haShanah	Fri 15 Sept (evening) to Sun 17 (night)
Fast of Gedaliah	Mon 18 Sept (dawn to dusk)
Kol Nidrei	Sun 24 Sept (evening)
Yom Kippur	Sun 24 Sept (evening) to Mon 25 (night)
Sukkot	Fri 29 Sept (evening) to Sun 1 Oct (night)
<i>Chol haMoed</i>	<i>continues until</i>
Shmini Atzeret	Fri 6 Oct (evening) to Shabbat 7 Oct
Simchat Torah	After Shabbat 7 Oct to Sun 8 (night)



Greenock Cemetery RESTORATION

In 2018, a visit to Greenock Cemetery revealed the existence of a small section with Jewish burials that was in a very dilapidated and unkempt condition. It could easily be missed in this vast cemetery, and although there are sixteen people buried in this section, there were only seven headstones, most of them broken and lying in pieces on the ground, with very faint Hebrew lettering that could hardly be read.

During the first half of 2023, work was initiated to repair and restore the headstones in the Jewish section, and in July a rededication ceremony was led by Senior Rabbi of Scotland, Moshe Rubin, and attended by over 50 people. Amongst them were relatives from across the UK of those buried there, members of the Glasgow Jewish Community, as well as friends, guests, and local dignitaries. It was a very poignant and serene service in memory of the members of the Greenock Jewish community interred there between 1908 and 1945.

Following the service, the Provost of Inverclyde, Drew McKenzie, welcomed the participants to a reception in the spectacular hall of the Municipal Buildings in the centre of Greenock.

The Greenock Jewish community has disappeared, but its history has been meticulously recorded in the book *Greenock's Jewish Community 1880-1940* by local historian Viki McDonnell. Every year there are numerous groups from all over the world that visit the cemetery. Some are visitors to Scotland who come to find the graves of their ancestors and families. The Greenock Tourist Board includes the Jewish section in the visitors' guide to the cemetery.

SAMMY STEIN



Historic Meeting of Representative Organisations

How the Jewish Community engages with wider society started a new chapter when SCoJeC and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council held their 2023 AGMs back-to-back, and the members of both organisations voted unanimously to ratify the proposal to form a single organisation that would encompass both roles.

Historically, the Rep Council has represented Jewish people in Glasgow and the West of Scotland for more than 100 years, while SCoJeC was set up in the age of Devolution as a single umbrella serving Jewish people throughout the whole of Scotland. We have always worked in collaboration, but in response to the changing demography of the community, both organisations now feel they should come more closely together, and to demonstrate this close collaboration, each organisation decided to elect some office bearers from the other to their own Executive.

Welcoming the agreement, Rep Council President Timothy Lovat said, *"Both organisations have made massive contributions to the improvement lives of Jewish people in Scotland. However, there has inevitably been some overlap and duplication, and it will be much more effective and efficient when we speak with a single voice."*

SCoJeC Chair Nicola Livingston added, *"I am delighted by the unanimous support from the members of both organisations for the plans to restructure. Our combined voices give us strength and increased visibility and have enabled us to develop a new model for providing the services required to represent, support and connect Jewish people in Scotland even more effectively."*

Following the AGM formalities, the meeting was addressed by Senior Public Sector Policy Adviser Robert Marshall, who was until recently head of the Scottish Government Connected Communities Division. In that role he said he had seen first-hand how faith communities had come together during the pandemic, putting doctrinal differences aside for the common good during those anxious, uncertain times. Faith communities now interact more with one another and the Scottish Government. The result is an agreed ground-breaking strategy for collective and bilateral engagement, and his new role is to improve religious literacy in the public sector.

Commending the Jewish community's engagement and plan for restructuring, Robert said, *"This historic joint meeting was important and I have been warmly welcomed. Creating a single body will help policy makers, who will not have to decide what weight to attach to different organisations. An even stronger voice that represents as effectively as you have done will be even more powerful."* and concluded by encouraging us to have courage, and to make a leap of faith to come together.

First Minister VISITS SHUL

The new First Minister, Humza Yousaf MSP, met the Jewish community just a few weeks after his election, and spoke about his friendships with Jewish pupils at school, and how much he values his continuing personal relationship with members of the community.

Discussing the recent rise in antisemitic incidents in Scotland, the First Minister said that an attack on one minority community is an attack on all, and pledged to do everything in his power to combat antisemitism. He expressed particular concern about recent reports from the CST and the Antisemitism Policy Trust about campus antisemitism, and assured us that he would push for the adoption of the internationally accepted IHRA definition of antisemitism by all further education institutions.

He was interested to hear about the large increase in the number of Jewish students studying in Scotland, and wanted to know how we can work together to encourage them to make Scotland a home beyond their university years. He also agreed to accept an invitation to meet with Jewish students in the next academic year.

The meeting was followed by a visit to Giffnock Newton Mearns Synagogue, where the First Minister donned his own tartan kippah which he had been given at a communal Burns Supper.

The First Minister said: *"I have long been a friend of the Jewish community in Scotland. I am grateful to SCoJeC and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council for inviting me to join discussions on issues affecting Jewish communities across Scotland. In the fight against antisemitism, the Jewish community in Scotland should be in no doubt that they have an ally in me as First Minister."*

Glasgow Rep Council President Timothy Lovat commented: *"It was a pleasure to meet with the First Minister, and I appreciated his frankness in the discussions regarding issues of communal concern."*

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski added: *"We are grateful to the First Minister for requesting this meeting so early in his tenure, and for giving so much time to hear first hand about the changing shape of the Jewish community of Scotland and Jewish people's concerns about living here. We are reassured by his desire to engage personally and address these concerns with the Community, and look forward to working with him and his Government to ensure that Scotland is a place where Jewish people can feel welcome, comfortable, and secure."*

SCoJeC



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◆ Forthcoming Events: **SAVE THE DATE!**

- ◆ Glasgow Klezmer Concert: Sun 22nd Oct
FOR DETAILS AND OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS, SEE:
www.scojec.org/whats-on.html

◆ SCoJeC is grateful to:

- ◆ Glasgow Jewish Community Trust
- ◆ Eloise Bishop, photos First Minister & AGM

◆ Help SCoJeC help your community:

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