

Welcome... Since the last issue of Four Corners we have celebrated a significant birthday for Israel, and Shavuot has come and gone. Whilst our prayers for rain have been convincingly answered here in Scotland, the sun still managed to shine for both the Lag b'Omer barbecue at Muiravonside Country Park and Ephraim's chat with the Queen at the Palace of Holyroodhouse! But a group of thirty Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'is, and Jews, together with a Hindu and a Buddhist, managed to avoid the July gloom by heading off to sunny Israel to increase understanding and friendship between faith communities in Scotland.

The AGM of SCoJeC was also held on a sunny day in June, but it was largely eclipsed by the launch of a new edition of *Scotland's Jews* by the Minister of Communities and Sport, Stewart Maxwell. Written by Kenneth Collins, Ephraim Borowski, and Leah Granat, it is set to become the standard source for everyone seeking information about the Scottish Jewish community.



Bat Mitzvah Celebrations IN DUNDEE

24th May was a very special day for the Dundee community, which held a double Bat Mitzvah celebration in the shul for Tamara Levy and Chloe Spicker.

The girls, who have known each other since they were three, live in the same Fife village. They explained the week's parshah, read from the Haphtarah in English, and spoke about what being Jewish means to them.

Chloe's favourite things about being Jewish are stories from the Bible and Friday nights. "Back at our house on Friday nights we try our best to make it special with candles, Kiddush wine, bread and salt. I say the brochat for the candles and the bread. No other religion does this and that's why I like it."

She also talked about three questions that Judaism uses to make us think about how we live with other people.

"The first question is: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? This looks like the answer is "no-one", but I think that's wrong. The answer I'd give is: my family and my friends will help me.

"The second question: If I am only for myself, what am I? The answer, in my opinion, is: I would be selfish.

"The third: If not now, when? This means you will have to take action one day - or do it now!"

Tamara said: "A Bat Mitzvah is significant as it symbolises the "coming of age" and celebrates that a girl is moving from being seen as a child to becoming an adult, or at least a teenager. "Coming of age" also means that I need to accept new responsibilities, but will also have more rights. I hope that I can be trusted in these new roles and recognise the needs of those around me, rather than just thinking about myself and my needs."



LEFT: TAMARA LEVY, RIGHT: CHLOE SPICKER

The service was devised and run by Harry Riffkin. Dundee chair Henny King gave an address and made a presentation on behalf of the congregation. This was an important event for the community, as well as for the girls, and many people contributed their time and energy to prepare the shul and grounds, and help with the service. The congregation of 42 people was not the biggest event ever at Dundee, since the shul has hosted SCoJeC's Scotland-wide events, but it was the biggest mounted with their own resources in many years.

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Israel - Going Strong at 60

ISRAELI IN SCOTLAND

ESTI
Ever since I've been in Scotland, I celebrated most of the Jewish holidays either at home with friends or with SCoJeC or Chabad, but for some strange reason I never managed to celebrate the most important holiday we as Israelis have, Yom Ha'Atzmaut or Independence Day.

This year Israel turned 60, and for a country with so much hardship, and equipped with a very stubborn folk, that is a massive achievement.

After receiving some info from SCoJeC regarding the UJIA event, we decided to head to Glasgow. Sign of the times that are upon us, the event was heavily guarded by Strathclyde police, and as we drove in there was a quiet but large anti-Israeli demonstration outside.

Whatever feeling I had after seeing the demonstration outside, soon dispersed after seeing the beautiful white and blue huge flags hanging inside.

The entrance to the event was designed as the entrance to Ben Gurion Airport. We were given a passport and after collecting stamps at each of the many creative stalls (making orange juice, Israeli jewellery design etc) the children received a surprise.

It was a nice warm day, almost as if we were in Tel Aviv. The children played outside and had fun, we chatted to friends and the feeling was warm and wholesome. Even miles away from our 60 year-old state, we still belong.



TOP:
AVIVIT SINGS
AT GLASGOW'S
YOM HA'ATZMAUT
CONCERT AGAINST A
BACKDROP OF ISRAELI
AND SCOTTISH FLAGS

ABOVE:
SUZANNE KAY SINGS
AT EDINBURGH'S YOM
HA'ATZMAUT EVENT

RIGHT:
CHILDREN WATCH A
CLOWN PERFORMING
AT GLASGOW'S EVENT



YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Several hundred people attended a Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebration in Glasgow, organised by UJIA and Enjoy. There was a wide variety of entertainments, fun tasks and stalls, including a magic show, a mini zoo, a falafel stand, and Krav Maga - Israeli Self Defence.

Outside, the younger children enjoyed an inflatable assault course, a bouncy castle and a bucking bronco. This was followed by a firework display in Eastwood Park.

Sounds International, singer/songwriter Daniel Canier, and Israeli singer Avivit, performed at a concert, accompanied by Yohan Bay, Ofer Shabi, and Cosimo Cadore in the adjacent theatre.

In Edinburgh, a Yom HaZikaron service was followed by an Israeli-style buffet supper, and entertainment.

SCOTTISH IN ISRAEL

JUDITH LIPMAN

Stranraer, Arad - what's the difference?!

Two small towns, both surrounded by hills, one on the water, the other overlooking water. Both with small compact town centres and irregular internal buses.

However, these are not my green bonny hills of Galloway, but fold on fold, hump over lump of yellow-brown, gritty, uncompromising desert stones. The sea glimpsed on clear days is the Dead Sea, not the sparkling waters of Loch Ryan. For an adopted Scot, it is a big change from a land of mist and rain to a land of cold nights and hot dry days.

Culinary despair as well - from Scotland's plentiful variety of fish to a shop only open on Wednesdays selling weird fishy-named stuff, so ... nae fish pie! Strangely enough there is plenty of porridge (from Cupar!) available in the desert, so in our cauld wet snell twa' months of winter we can sup on hot parritch and remember a far-away land covered in snow, or just fair drookit in rain!

Stranraer and Arad both have small individually owned shops as well as some chain stores and supermarkets, but the languages

are different. Russian in Arad (aye, I said Russian!) mixed with mellifluous Arabic, rapid Ivrit, and, on Friday morning by the coffee shop, English plus a wee bittie Scots. Morning coffee, not tea, but Arad, like Stranraer, is well endowed with cafés and bakeries. The difference is that we sit oot, but in Stranraer they sit inside to avoid being blown over to Belfast by the wind. No 'fly cemeteries' (fruit slices) though! Our flies are alive and buzzing - just brush them off your chocolate croissant and carry on eating - and instead of folk plootering about in summer raincoats, you can admire the embroidery on the Bedouin robes.

When in Beersheva at the seniors club, well that's me back into blethering Scots with twa' other folk... What do I miss? People's Friend, tablet, Burns Night, and Hogmanay. I don't miss the Scottish weather.

YOM HASHOAH GLASGOW

The focal point of this year's Yom Hashoah event in Glasgow was the first performance of the play *67 Lost Years: Moniek's Play*, by David Ian Neville.

The drama tells how cousins Moniek Garber and Moniek (Moshe) Porat, from the town of Volozhyn, became separated during the Second World War, after both were sentenced to serve time in the Gulags. One ended up in the Russian army and the other fighting for the Poles.

After the war each of the cousins believed that none of their relatives had survived, and it was only 67 years later, that Moniek, now living in East Kilbride, was reunited with his cousin Moshe who now lives in Israel. The discovery was made with help from Glasgow genealogist Michael Tobias, who runs JewishGen (<http://www.jewishgen.org/>).

All roles in the play were performed by teenagers, who also compèred the evening, gave a presentation about last year's UJIA youth trip to Poland, and lit memorial candles to a musical accompaniment from violinist Lev Atlas, as the names of Holocaust victims with relatives and friends in the local community were displayed on screens.

Rev Ernest Levy, himself a survivor of the concentration camps, recited the Memorial Prayer and Kaddish, and music was provided by the Glasgow Jewish Singers, conducted by Eddie Binnie. Philip Mendelsohn, Glasgow Jewish Representative Council President, and SCoJeC Vice-Chair, congratulated the young people on having presented such a thoughtful event.



THE CAST OF "67 LOST YEARS"
WITH MONIEK GARBER (5TH FROM LEFT),
AND ORGANISERS OF THE GLASGOW YOM HASHOAH EVENT

EDINBURGH

Edinburgh's Yom HaShoah Service was held in the Peace Garden in Princes Street Gardens on a sunny spring evening. Raymond Taylor, the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Edinburgh Synagogue, welcomed the Lord Provost, the Rt Hon George Grubb, several Councillors, and more than 60 members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community.

The Lord Provost expressed his pleasure at being present, and spoke with sincerity and compassion about the Holocaust. A minute's silence in memory of all the victims of the Holocaust followed the lighting of a memorial candle beside the Holocaust Memorial Stone, after which Rabbi David Rose and David Goldberg conducted the service which ended with the Mourners' Kaddish.

Fifth Corner

GILA GRANAT

**Wow! Scotland?
I've never met anyone from Scotland before!**

This is the reaction that I am frequently faced with when meeting new people and telling them that I come originally from Glasgow, Scotland. I must admit that I used to really enjoy these exchanges; it was like being a celebrity for 10 minutes. However this novelty has somewhat worn off after living in Israel for 3 years and having to conduct the same conversation with the hundreds of new people I meet.

I can even accurately predict the whole conversation:

So, where in America are you from?

(After not being understood by a single person during my first year in Israel, my accent changed – survival instinct!)

— *Actually I'm from Scotland.*

Scotland! [Profound admiration] That is so cool!

— *Smile*

So tell me, do the men really wear skirts there? And play those things, you know...they make a lot of noise...

— *Bagpipes?*

Yeh, them! Well?

They then look at me and say

Do you get asked this all the time?

If only they knew!

To tell the truth I am very proud to be a Scottish Jew living in Israel (and not just because of the blatant admiration I receive!). Growing up in Scotland has provided me with tools that have deeply enriched my Jewish identity and well-equipped me for living in today's turbulent times in Israel.

One of the things that makes me most proud to be a Scot is Scotland's focus on equality. I feel like I grew up in a society that truly accepts people as the person they are – where race, faith, and belief do not make you any more or less of a person, where people are judged by who they are and what they do, rather than with ignorant generalisations. Not only is this obviously a worthy ideal for all to strive to attain, it is also one which I find particularly important for me personally, in my own particular situation.

Living in Israel is complex and often frustrating. Having been raised in Scotland with ideals of not judging people, the transition to life in Israel, where these judgements are made daily, was hard, though it is quite possible that the only reason there are still Jews living in Israel today is because of these very same generalisations. Daily there are rumours of an intended attack, warnings of a '*chefetz chashud*', a suspicious object, and sadly the occasional killing. To try to prevent these attacks every day someone is 'discriminated' against. Security checks around the cities wave through members of certain groups whilst consistently checking members of others. Coming, as I said before, from a Scottish perspective, I initially found this very hard to deal with. What do you mean only check some people? That's not fair! If you check them, check everyone or better still, don't check anyone! How can you incriminate a whole group of people for the action of an individual?

It took a while for me to realise that I was misusing this wonderful quality I acquired through my upbringing. I was overly focussed on trying to judge people favourably, not generalising, and treating everyone equally to the point where I found myself even diminishing murder. I had to learn how to balance my ideals with the realities of everyday life. Maybe it is unfair that certain people are always considered as suspicious, but what if this saves lives? How much is a life worth to us? Are we prepared to risk losing a soul to ensure that someone else doesn't lose face? Life – all life – is too important to take chances with, and we sometimes need to make hard decisions that balance everyone's rights – including **everyone's** right to life.

FEASTING AND FASTING



Lag b'Omer Barbecue

More than 50 people from across Scotland converged on Muiravonside Country Park near Linlithgow on a sunny May Sunday to enjoy an intercommunal barbecue. Barbecues smoked, adults chatted, children wandered off to the adventure playground, and a good time was had by all. "A few years ago we just decided that Lag b'Omer was a great reason to ask people to come

along to a barbecue", commented Irving Hyman, who, together with his wife, Anne, organised the event, "and they've been coming along ever since!"

Lag b'Omer is the 33rd day of the Omer, the period of seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuot. In the first century CE thousands of Rabbi Akiva's students died in this period, and it is observed as a time of mourning. However, there were no deaths on the 33rd day, so this has become a day of celebration.

The three weeks between the Fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av are also a time of mourning, in this case for the destruction of the Temples.

17 Tammuz: till nightfall 20 July
9 Av: evening 9 – nightfall 10 Aug

Cause and Effect

TALYA SILVER (BASED ON AN IDEA HEARD FROM REBBETZIN TARSHISH)

The depressing summer months seem to stretch on forever, full of broken promises and lost potential. No, I'm not talking about the weather, but rather the spiritual climate. We never forget the ruined Temple, or neglect to pray for its rebuilding, but at this time of year we remember it most intensely, especially on the ninth of Av, the anniversary of its destruction. It's a good time to reflect on the cause of the tragedy.

Spiritual events have spiritual causes. A history professor explains events in terms of military, political and economic factors. But how could anyone destroy God's House if He didn't want them to? And – the real question - why would He want it destroyed?

The Talmud (Yoma 9b) tells us the real cause of the disaster was *sinat chinam* – baseless hatred. Which seems astonishing, not to say shocking. Does the punishment fit the crime, the cause lead smoothly to effect? Hatred is certainly negative, but does it warrant such a strong reaction?

Tradition says that every Jew is compared to a letter in the Sefer Torah. On the simple level, that means we are all holy and have intrinsic importance. On a deeper level, the fact that every letter needs to be whole for the scroll to be kosher, means that every individual is necessary for our service of God to be complete. A letter in a 'boring' list of place names is as crucial as one in the Ten Commandments, the 'ordinary' person in the street as significant as the greatest Rabbi. On Succot, we remind ourselves of this idea with the mitzvah of the four species. As we hold them together in our hands we realise that all types of Jew, whether righteous and learned (represented by the fragrant, tasty etrog) or unlettered (the willow lacking smell and pleasant taste) are united and important to Hashem.

There are lots of different letters, which make up myriads of different words with different meanings. We're not important because we're all the same, we're necessary because we're all different. Just as it would be ridiculous for a trombone to look down on a flute because it's so quiet, or for a flute to disdain the brass because they're too loud, so too it doesn't make sense for a Scot to make fun of an Israeli (or a Sassenach!) or vice versa – each quality has its place in the overall symphony we play together.

This explains why hatred destroyed the Temple. When soldiers are truly fighting for their country, then they respect the strengths of each unit. Infantry, navy and airforce are deployed at the appropriate place and time and each is appreciated for the part it contributes to winning the war. But when a soldier is fighting for his own glory, looking out for a chance to win a medal and advance his own career, then he will minimise the contribution of others in the team, make fun of their weaknesses. Scorn their differences rather than respect them.

If we are really serving God, we will understand how vital every individual is to that overall goal, even (especially) those that are different from us. Different in personality, different in upbringing, different in talents, life situation and perspective. We will appreciate them and respect them.

But if we're serving ourselves, out for our own aggrandisement, those who are different are a threat. Hated. Baselessly. When we divide the world into those like us, and those not like us, we prove that we're not really serving God. And that is all the Temple was for. So when we weren't really using it, God took the empty shell of the building away from us and sent us into the Diaspora, where He hoped that in the traumas and travails of our exile we would realise how much we need each other.

And that our hatred would turn to love.

May it happen speedily in our days. It's up to us!

INVESTITURE at the Palace of Holyroodhouse

Ephraim Borowski was invested with the MBE awarded in the New Year Honours List for "services on behalf of the Jewish Community in Scotland" at a ceremony at the Palace of Holyroodhouse on 1 July. The award was presented by the Queen, to the accompaniment of music played by the orchestra of the Scots Guards. Ephraim was accompanied by his wife, Margalit, and, to signal his insistence that the award belongs to SCoJeC for its achievements, by the new Chair, Walter Sneader, and Public Affairs Officer, Leah Granat. It was, said Walter, "a regal occasion for Ephraim, Margalit, and for SCoJeC too."

"It was very humbling," said Ephraim, "to be amongst such a variety of people who were being honoured for their contributions to so many aspects of public life, and very gratifying that the Jewish Community was being recognised in this way. It may be a cliché, but it really was a unique experience to receive an award from the Queen in the grand setting of Holyrood Palace, although the ceremony itself was quite intimate. In fact you could even call it heimish, since perhaps the nicest moment was when an usher showed me to my seat with a "mazaltov" – it was Sir Malcolm Rifkind in his medal-bedecked uniform as an officer of the Royal Company of Archers!"

EPHRAIM AND MARGALIT AFTER THE INVESTITURE



Scottish Interfaith Pilgrimage

SCoJeC has been instrumental in organising an interfaith pilgrimage to Israel as part of an initiative to increase understanding and friendship between communities in Scotland.

The idea grew out of a conversation between SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski, and Rami Ousta, CEO of BEMIS, the umbrella organisation for minority community organisations in Scotland, who were concerned that tensions in the Middle East may sometimes be an obstacle to the development of good relations locally. The Very Rev Dr Finlay Macdonald, Principal Clerk, and former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and Na'eem Raza, Director of Meem, a diversity training organisation, both joined the steering group, and around thirty people from seven different faith communities were invited to participate.

The pilgrimage has received funding from the Scottish Government, and is supported by the First Minister, Alex Salmond, and by both the Israeli Embassy in London and the British Ambassador to Israel. The First Minister has written: "I was delighted to hear of this initiative ... the example the group will set will clearly demonstrate there is no place for religious intolerance in Scotland."

"This is a wonderful example of how a chance remark can lead to something big", commented Ephraim. "With the generous support of the Scottish Government and charities, we have put together a mixed group of faith and community leaders, young and old, men and women. We will live and learn together for a week, in order to foster better understanding of each other's faiths. Our hope is that we will be able both to be a living example of coexistence and co-operation for Israelis and Palestinians, and that we will be able to spread that message on our return to Scotland."

"It is deeply ironic that a land called "holy" should be at the heart of so much conflict", mused Finlay Macdonald. "I hope that our pilgrimage will be a journey into closer understanding, deepening respect and enduring friendship, and that it will contribute in its own small way to the peace for which we all pray."

The pilgrimage takes place as Four Corners goes to press. On their return participants will visit a wide range of organisations to talk about their experiences, which they hope will enable them to make a positive contribution to the development of good relations between Scotland's many faith communities.

For more information, and to read a diary of the pilgrimage, see http://www.scojec.org/events/2008/08vii_pilgrimage/pilgrimage.html

READ ALL ABOUT THE TRIP IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

SCoJeC AGM

22 June 2008



Chair: Walter Sneider (co-opted member)
Vice-Chairs: Philip Mendelsohn (Glasgow)
 Hilary Rifkind (Edinburgh)
 Frank House (Argyll and the Highlands)
Secretary: Paul Spicker (Dundee)
Treasurer: Daniel Clapham (co-opted member)

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski recalled the highlights of the last year during the AGM which was held at Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow. These included a visit from First Minister Alex Salmond, during which he visited Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary School, and met a cross-section of communal leaders, a visit to Giffnock Synagogue by the Lord Advocate, Elish Angiolini, and the publication of Scotland's Jews.

The outgoing Chair, Kenneth Collins, praised SCoJeC's achievements in consolidating its links with all aspects of Scottish civil society, and constantly working for the wellbeing of the Jewish community in Scotland. He also thanked the various bodies which have supported SCoJeC's work during the past year, amongst which were the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, the Glasgow Jewish Community Trust, the Scottish Council of Synagogues, Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, Glasgow Reform Synagogue, the Board of Deputies, the Scottish Government, BEMIS, and the Clore Foundation.

Kenneth's final duty as Chair was to present Ephraim with an engraved Kiddush cup to mark his award of an MBE in the New Year Honours List (see page 5), pictured here with incoming chairman, Walter Sneider (centre).

To read the Annual Reports, and find out more about Who's Who in SCoJeC, see http://www.scojec.org/events/2008/08vi_agm/agm.html

New office-bearers are:



The AGM was followed by the launch of **Scotland's Jews**

A new expanded edition of Scotland's Jews by Kenneth Collins, Ephraim Borowski, and Leah Granat, was launched at Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow on Sunday 22 June. It has been published with support from the Scottish Government, and the launch was attended by the Minister of Communities and Sport, Stewart Maxwell.

"I wrote a brief pamphlet a long time ago" commented Kenneth, "and we came to realise that a lot of the material needed elaboration. This second edition is much more of a handbook on Scottish Jewry in all its aspects."

Stewart Maxwell welcomed the publication, saying that he "would certainly recommend it to others outwith the Jewish community because it has an astounding wealth of information and is bound to be a very helpful guide. The Jewish community has managed to strike a very good balance between being Scottish and Jewish in a positive way. You are an example of how to do it and do it well. You have integrated well whilst retaining your own identity, and with a strong work ethic and great mix of character, you have been a very good asset and made a huge contribution to Scotland."

The book includes a survey of the contemporary community and its concerns, Jewish issues in employment, health and other contexts, and the demography of the community as revealed in the 2001 census. There is also a basic introduction to Jewish beliefs and practices, and a guide to John Clark's celebrated stained glass windows, originally commissioned for Queens Park Synagogue and now housed in Giffnock Synagogue in Glasgow.

Scotland's Jews will be distributed to all MSPs, Scottish MPs, schools, libraries, local councils, police forces, and hospitals. It is available online at http://www.scojec.org/resources/files/scotlands_jews.pdf, and can be purchased from SCoJeC for £6.00 (inc. p&p within the UK).



COMMUNITIES MINISTER, STEWART MAXWELL (SECOND LEFT) WITH SCoJeC CHAIR WALTER SNEADER, AND THE AUTHORS

Both the Chief Rabbi and First Minister have written forewords:

Sir Jonathan Sacks writes: "I have long been impressed by how the Jewish communities of Scotland combine loyalty to our Jewish way of life with Scottish identity - integration without assimilation. This classic guide to the history of Jews in Scotland is a wonderful informative introduction to a community that has written a notable chapter in the history of our people."

Alex Salmond describes the book as: "providing highly useful information about Judaism and issues affecting Scotland's Jewish communities, [that] will help reinforce the resolute belief in One Scotland of many cultures and faiths - a belief that all of us have our part to play in weaving the tartan of Scottish society."