

### In the Frame:

### **JEWISH LIFE IN SCOTLAND**

MICHAEL MAIL

The proposal for the acclaimed documentary photographer, Judah Passow, to record and celebrate Jewish life in Scotland has received a highly significant endorsement from Scotland's leading arts funding body with the award of a £50 000 grant from Creative Scotland.

SCoJeC's support has been vital to getting the project off the ground and, with this new backing as well as a number of very generous private sponsors, it will now definitely go ahead. For some time, I had been thinking of a way of honouring the Scottish Jewish story - all

our stories - and when I saw Judah's impressive work on



THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION **OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND** 

contemporary Jewish identity at the London Jewish Museum, I found my answer. Now Judah will travel throughout Scotland documenting Jewish life as it is lived today, including the inter-play of Jewishness and Scottishness, and we hope to launch the exhibition at the Scottish Parliament, then tour Scotland and internationally.

If you have any interesting ideas on subject matter that Judah might cover, please contact Fiona Frank at SCoJeC:

#### fiona@scojec.org or 0777 920 6522

This initiative is unprecedented - one moment in the life of our community at the start of a new millennium will be on the record forever.





# Dance and Joy to the sounds of Kasha Malasha

ESTHER FINLAY

What a lovely and joyful afternoon we had in Dundee Synagogue hall!

The weather was bright and sunny, and the place was full with members, friends, and children, all in high spirits, dancing ... dancing ... dancing!

SCoJeC Project Worker Fiona Frank, with her band Kasha Malasha, filled the place with beautiful dancing melodies, getting everyone on to their feet, dancing and twirling as she guided us through the steps; two circles following the rhythm of the melodies, clapping feet and hands, and, all around, smiles and laughter.

After all that energy, everybody eagerly enjoyed drinks to cool down, and plates piled with the goodies that lay on all the tables, while we listened to beautiful Yiddish and Russian songs. And then, all of a sudden, the crowd was back on the dancing floor, the place like a hive buzzing with activity, and so much happiness and laughter, and a feeling of joy and togetherness – just magic!

A very big thank-you to Fiona, Kasha Malasha, and everyone who participated in our ceilidh!



### Voices of Grandchildren

RRIAN PILCHIE

A smiling, young-looking man walked into the room, wearing a blue tie. "Hello, everyone," said the man. I didn't think he was the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom – he was much too young, much too cheery to be a hardened negotiator. Yet sure enough, that is how he was introduced: Daniel Taub, Israeli Ambassador to the UK. His speech was about to begin.

And then it happened. One student jumped to his feet and angrily began shouting. Ambassador Taub had not so much as introduced his topic, and already this student was unraveling a Palestinian flag from underneath his coat and accusing the Ambassador of "war crimes" and "apartheid".

The audience were not impressed. "Sit down," came the first shout. "Ye'll have yer chance to ask questions!", "Your right to free speech isn't any more important than his; sit down!", "I have a right to hear what this man has to say!" But the demonstrator was not prepared to listen.

One by one, a sprinkling of students planted in the audience stood up and joined him. They had rehearsed. A few unraveled flags. In unison, they accused and berated. In military fashion they sounded off, call and response: "Occupation is a crime! Free! Free! Palestine!" and "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!" This wasn't an interruption or a statement; this was a hijacking.

And for a stunning few minutes, it seemed as though chaos had taken hold of the room. The feeling of utmost helplessness, of watching someone being screamed down by maniacal voices, of not being able to do anything to stop the hatred, the anger, the pain.

But then something changed. One student asked to be heard. She spoke briefly about how she was a visiting student, an American, and how she was offended by the way her fellow students were preventing dialogue to be heard on campus.

Students began standing up and walking away from the protesters. We began moving down the slanted room, close to the Ambassador. We sat cross-legged in the stairwell, like children listening to a story. We sat close enough to hear the Ambassador over the shouts of the extremists.

"It is a disappointment to me," he said, "That here we see less tolerance, not more tolerance, than we have in our region. It surprises people that we Israelis and Palestinians do get on – a lot better than the people defending Israelis and defending Palestinians. One day, you will be asked, 'What did you do to try and bring peace?' People who are destroying dialogue are not bringing peace."

The Ambassador took what questions he could between the shouts. Before long, however, he had to leave. The screams and chants had gone on for nearly an hour, and incredibly, the University had done nothing to remove the protesters.

I remember a story I was once told about the Oslo peace process. Rabin and Arafat weren't getting anywhere until someone mentioned their grandchildren. Thinking about future generations, the two men were reminded of the need to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict between their peoples.

So what kind of future have we, the youth of this generation? Will we create the kind of future Rabin and Arafat dreamed of for their children's children? Or will we assassinate hopes for peace, and silence those with whom we disagree?

If the people in that meeting were representative, I believe the answer is clear. A few of us will be loud, angry, and intolerant; we will close our hearts and minds to others. And the rest of us, the overwhelming majority, will acknowledge that education is about learning from one another, not keeping one another silent. We will create a more welcoming, tolerant, mature environment in which to move forward.

When I first entered the lecture theatre that day, a girl with dyed hair smiled and offered to move aside, to make room for me. That girl later stood up and shouted throughout the entire evening, refusing to allow the Israeli to speak.

I hope that one day she once again smiles. I hope that one day she is once again willing to move a bit to the side, to make room for someone else - someone different - to sit beside her. And I hope that one day our grandchildren will sit down together and talk.

A longer version of this article can be read at

http://peacelight14.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/voices-of-grandchildren.html

## Edinburgh Bet HaMidrash Transformed

EDWARD GREEN



Edinburgh Shul's refurbished and transformed Bet Hamidrash was rededicated by Rabbi David Rose and reopened by Alec Rubenstein at a service attended by over a hundred congregants, representatives from Netherlee, Clarkston, and Queen's Park Synagogue in Glasgow, and other guests.

It was an afternoon of celebration – not only does the newly refurbished area look splendid, but it shows that we as a community have risen to the challenge of moving with the times and recognised that the needs of our congregation have changed.

The old classroom where the revered Samuel Rubenstein taught so many of our congregants has been incorporated into the enlarged Bet Hamidrash, creating a comfortable and spacious area for the ladies of the community to enjoy services, providing not only increased comfort, but the opportunity to feel really part of the service and not be hidden behind a bamboo screen or wall hatch as previously.

We are delighted to have been given a Sefer Torah from the recently closed Netherlee, Clarkston, and Queen's Park Synagogue, lighter in weight than our usual and for this most welcome, as well as their mechitzah and carpet. We are very fortunate in having received these items and others from Clarkston at just the right time to allow a financial saving for Edinburgh, and we are pleased that these furnishings will continue to be used in a Jewish place of worship in Scotland.

Four outstanding stained glass windows by the late renowned William Wilson, and two new, specially commissioned, stained glass windows each side of the Aron Kodesh, have ensured that that the whole area has a wonderfully spiritual and ecclesiastical air. The space has truly become more than a Bet Hamidrash; it has become a warm, bright, and inviting smaller synagogue where we can enjoy services on the colder winter Shabbats, on Friday nights, Sunday mornings, through the week, and when family services are held.



## Refugee Stories

Interfaith Scotland (the new name of the Scottish Inter Faith Council) has a new project that aims to identify the journey to Scotland of people from around the world who have been persecuted because of their faith. They plan to produce a booklet based on the personal experiences of participants, to highlight the negative consequences of prejudice and the positive impact of establishing good relations between faith communities.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence, and participants will be fully involved in the editing process, and will be asked to approve the final version of their stories for inclusion in the booklet. The stories will be completely anonymous.

If you would be interested in participating in this project, or know of someone else who might like to take part, please contact Frances Hume, Development Officer, Interfaith Scotland.

Contact: fhume@scottishinterfaithcouncil.org. tel: 0141 420 6982

## Aberdeen Shul AGM

FHUD REITER

Aberdeen has had a good year, highlights being the first-ever visit by the Chief Rabbi, and two Bar Mitzvahs. We also introduced a "social" membership, which seems to be attracting more people to join our shul. Our AGM took place in November, and we had a lot of discussion about putting on more events in order to involve more people. Suggestions included a book club, regular sessions for children, a Torah study group, and a regular film night, and we decided to canvass people to assess which of these were most appealing. The other main topic of discussion was our building; we are currently creating a plan or "business case" for upgrading it, and will start a fund-raising drive when this is done.

## "yes to freedom of expression no to insults and hate"

SCOJEC issued a statement in support of a recent

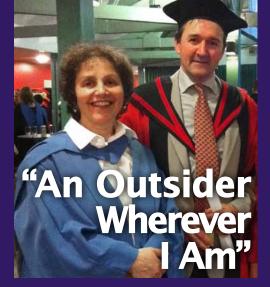
rally organised by the Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS) under the banner "YES to freedom of expression; NO to insults and hate", the rally was also supported by other faith communities in Scotland. Our statement read:

The Jewish Community of Scotland shares the concerns of the Muslim community about the recently released film, "Innocence of Muslims". The clear purpose of this hoax was to stir up racial and religious hatred, and we therefore unequivocally deplore it, as we do any attempt to cause inter-communal tension.

We unreservedly dissociate ourselves from this message of hate, and express our solidarity with those who are the target of the warped views of whoever is responsible. Such provocations can only fuel distrust between communities and contribute to the conditions in which extremism of all types will thrive, and as ever it is the innocent majority who will suffer.

We have consistently declared our belief in a Scotland of many cultures, faiths, and traditions, and we reiterate our wholehearted support for all measures designed to marginalise and eliminate sectarianism and religious and ethnic hatred from our society.

Salah Beltagui, Chair of the MCS, welcomed SCoJeC's statement, saying: "It is heartening to hear you reiterate the message of solidarity from your community. I hope that we will continue to work together against those who try to attack our common values and try to create divisions and hatred."



Congratulations to SCoJeC's Outreach Worker, Fiona Frank (pictured at her graduation), who has been awarded a PhD by the University of Strathclyde for her thesis entitled, An Outsider Wherever I Am? Transmission of Jewish Identity through Five Generations of One Extended Scottish Jewish Family. For her research she interviewed her own extended family, the descendants of Rabbi Zvi David Hoppenstein and his wife Sophia, who arrived in Scotland around 1882. The couple had nine children, and Fiona tracked down all the living members of the family, finding some still in Glasgow, but others living all over England, and as far afield as Capetown.

She found that although many individuals, like many Jewish people before them, had changed their name to disguise their Jewish (or perhaps German) origin, several branches had kept the middle name 'Hope' - both for girls and boys - as a reminder of the 'Hoppenstein' legacy. She came across stories like the man who had married out and kept his Jewish origins secret from his children, and the woman who had 'married back in' after a parent had married out.

The title of the thesis comes from a comment by one interviewee, born in Glasgow but now living in London, who said:

"I've felt marginal to every community that I've ever been in. Marginal to Scottish culture, being Jewish. Marginal to Jewish culture, being not one of the Jewish community because they all lived out in Giffnock and Newton Mearns ... Certainly being down here [in London], being Scottish and Jewish makes you feel different".

Others in the family, including those she found who still led a wholly Jewish life, laying tefillin and serving on shul committees, talked less of their 'outsider' status, but every interviewee had experiences of antisemitism to recount experiences that were notably different for the different generations of the family.

Fiona, who was the first recipient of Scottish Oral History Centre's Neil Rafeek prize for the quality of her data, interviewed almost all the members of the third and fourth generation of the family. Her innovative study also involved the use of other sources such as census data, contemporary newspapers, and minutes of meetings, to find out about the first and second generations, and, unusually, the use of Facebook to communicate with the fifth generation!

As I walk down the streets of Glasgow and see the preparations being made for the upcoming gentile holiday, and am beginning plans for our own holiday of Chanukah, my thoughts go back a year to the streets of Jerusalem and my home in Moshav Matityahu in the Modiin region of Israel. Who would have imagined then that within a year I would be in Giffnock, a Student Chaplain involved with the

### WINTER CALENDAR

**Chanukah:** 

Sat 8th Dec (after Shabbat) till Sun 16th Dec

Fast of 10th Tevet:

Sun 23rd Dec (day)

Tu B'Shvat: (New Year of Trees) Shabbat 26th Jan

Ta'anit Esther (Fast of Esther): Thurs 21 Feb (dav)

**Purim:** Sat 23rd (after Shabbat) & Sun 24th Feb (day)

youth of Scotland? I lived in Matityahu, and grew up in Jerusalem, where the Chanukah story occurred. The Maccabees lived in Modiin and the Temple they dedicated was in Jerusalem. Although there are definitely natural causes that can explain my move, it is most certainly the hand of G-d that directed me from Israel to Glasgow.

These thoughts remind me of the Talmud's explanation of what miraculous event Chanukah commemorates: "When the Greeks entered the Temple they defiled all the oil that was in the Temple, and when the Hasmoneans were victorious and overcame them they searched and found only one jar of oil intact. In it there was oil sufficient only for one day's kindling, but a miracle occurred and it continued to burn for eight days."

So then why is Chanukah celebrated for eight days and not for seven? The first day of the burning oil was natural, not a miracle, so, if the miracle was really only for seven days, we should only light candles seven days.

Two of the literally hundreds of answers that have been given to this question are the following. Firstly, there were in fact two miracles that occurred. The miracle of the victory of the few and weak Maccabees over the many and strong Greeks, and the miracle of the oil burning an extra seven days. The first day commemorates the miracle of the victory, and the remaining seven days commemorate the miracle of the oil. We light a candle the first day to show that the victory, like the oil, was in fact a miracle produced by Divine intervention.

But thinking of how Divine providence has shaped my life this year, the answer that speaks to me best is that we acknowledge that even the natural burning of the oil on the first day was in fact an act of G-d, as all nature is an expression of G-d's will. So too, one should strive to see the hand of G-d in all aspects of one's personal life.

We light the Chanukah candles for pirsuma d'nisa, to publicise the miracle, and so we spread the Jewish light to the world and help empower ourselves to grow spiritually closer to G-d.

### Chanukah in the Highlands!

PLEASE IOIN SCOIEC FOR latkes, doughnuts and candles

LOCHGILPHEAD: Sunday 9 Dec, 4 - 5.30pm

MS Centre, Campbell St

**OBAN:** Monday 10 Dec, 5 - 6.30 pm The Library, Albany St

Tuesday 10 Dec, 5 - 6.30 pm

**INVERNESS:** The Library, Margaret St

**DUNDEE:** Sunday 16 Dec. 3 - 5 pm Synagogue, St Mary Pl (SCoJeC Council meeting 1 - 3 pm)

CONTACT: FIONA 0777-920 6522 FIONA@SCOJEC.ORG

Bring a chanukiah if you can!

## Glasgow Centenaries

Next year is the centenary of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and it is no coincidence that that milestone was preceded by the 100th birthday of the Glasgow Jewish Students Society.

Both originate in the aftermath of the arrest in the Ukraine of Mendel Beilis in the summer of 1911, for the supposedly ritual murder of a 13-year old boy. Vicious antisemitic press fuelled this blood libel. As Bernard Malamud tells in his fictionalised account, *The Fixer*, Beilis was promised release if he would confess, but he demanded a fair trial. An international campaign took up his case.

In Glasgow an ad hoc protest group from the Gorbals community was joined by Jewish students. They then formed the Glasgow Jewish Student Society, and the following year their elders followed suit and established the Representative Council.

#### **Glasgow Jewish Student Society**

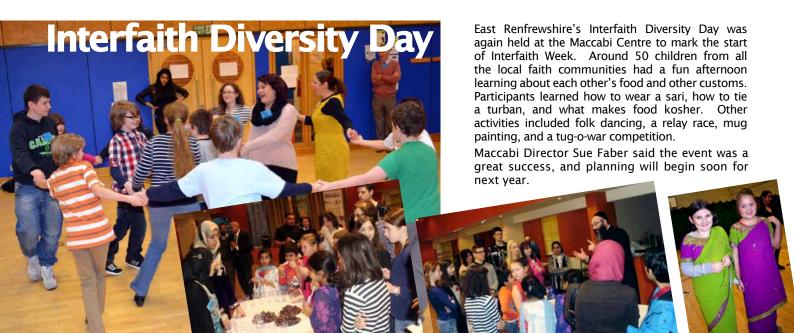
The centenary of the Student Society, probably the first such celebration in the UK, was marked by a gala dinner in the magnificent Victorian setting of Glasgow City Chambers, organised by a group of former and current students and Chaplaincy.

The evening began with a civic reception hosted by the Depute Lord Provost, for nearly 200 current and former members and guests, including 15 former Presidents, who came from as far afield as Italy, Venezuela, and Israel, including the first Northern Region Jewish Student Chaplain, Rabbi Michael Rosin, who flew in from Israel to speak. Between courses, Harvey Kaplan (President 1977) presented a history of the Society illustrated by photographs and documents from the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre. Charles Kennedy MP, Rector of Glasgow University, proposed a toast to the Society, and Nick Furcillo, the current President, replied.

David Rosenberg (1967), one of the 15 former Presidents who attended, reflected: It was a magnificent night of nostalgia and reunion in the splendour of the City Chambers. This was nostalgia of the purest kind. Every generation had a wonderful night. And, oh those amazing photographs, from top hats and bow ties, through psychedelics, to today's baseball caps! We exchanged hugs and business cards

THE MAGNIFICENT SETTING
OF THE CITY CHAMBERS' WITH
ANTICLOCKWISP CHAPLAIN
WITH CLURENT STUDENTS: 15
PAST PRESIDENTS FROM 1948 TO
2012; CHARLE KENNEDY WITO
2012; CHARLE KENNEDY WITO
HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY'
"PHOTOS BY WILL MCGREGOR/
STUART HATCH

and promised to remain resolutely in touch. I know I meant it. My time in GJSS and in Northern Region shaped me, and bestowed friendships and stories that thrive into 2012, and G-d willing, well beyond. I am so grateful for the fun and the people of that time, still among our dearest friends, and having the chance to celebrate it in glorious reunion with them and others, long-missed but not forgotten, was a privilege I shall cherish. On behalf of all of us, thank you.





### to Church of Scotland

SCoJeC has always been very clear that it is not our role to comment on events in the Middle East, or to advocate any particular of the myriad positions on the conflict that individuals in the Community may hold, unless there is a direct impact on the Jewish Community in Scotland. So we have drawn the attention of the police and Crown Office to the increase in reported antisemitic incidents whenever there is any outbreak of hostilities, and, with the Scottish University Jewish Chaplaincy Board, we have defended the right of Jewish students to meet to discuss or to support Israel without being subjected to harassment and intimidation.

This distinction was crucial to our recent protest to the Church of Scotland about their sponsorship of a conference organised by the so-called "Balfour Project" to mark the 95th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. This crossed the line, not because it was advertised as a campaign to repudiate Britain's support for "a national home for the Jewish people", with speakers from organisations that seek "historic apologies" for Australian Aborigines, native Americans, and the Irish, but because the advertised "keynote speaker" has a long record of associating himself with a wide range of antisemitic themes, from advertisements for the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to Iranian Holocaust denial. The Rev Stephen Sizer, a Church

of England vicar, has been censured by the Council of Christians and Jews for "conduct unbecoming of a clergyman", and is the subject of an unprecedented disciplinary complaint to his Church by the Board

Unfortunately, the Church dismissed our concern as an "issue of perception". SCoJeC then wrote after consultation with communal organisations, "that for the Church of Scotland to provide a platform for this speaker would be perceived as highly offensive throughout the Jewish community." We made it unambiguously clear that our complaint was not about Sizer's views on Israel or the Middle East, but "his repeated flirtations with supersessionism, Holocaust denial, right-wing extremism, and unabashed antisemitism".

Sadly, their response failed to address any of the evidence we provided. The Principal Clerk wrote that the Church is "satisfied by [Sizer's] own public position statements" that he is not antisemitic, but only critical of the State of Israel. This self-evidently is not the case - as we said, "linking to another website is advertising its content. He is thus advertising the advertising of the Protocols, antisemitic conspiracy theories, and Holocaust denial." As the Board of Deputies put it, "[Sizer] spends time trawling dark and extreme corners of the internet ... introducing his readers to the racist and antisemitic websites from where he draws his material.'

Our reply reaffirmed our commitment to good interfaith relations, but said that the dissemination of Sizer's message in Scotland undermines this. While welcoming their desire to "overcome this difficult moment and move forward in developing our good relationship", we expressed pessimism about "the harm your willing association with this man and his activities will undoubtedly do. Four weeks later we have not had the courtesy of a reply.



TOP: AMANDA HYAMS HOLDING TRAINING FOLDER ABOVE: ELIZABETH DOUCETTE AND ELLI ABRAMOV

that we had received £10 000 from the Voluntary Action Fund for a project to train young people, students, and others to support older Jewish people to get online. We now have nine volunteers lined up from all over Scotland who will undertake training with ACE IT Edinburgh over the next six months as part of this project.

Corners we announced

Elizabeth Doucette, a student from Canada at the University of Edinburgh, told us: "I think that volunteering with this project will be a great way of getting connected with the local community and hearing from older Jewish people about their lives." "It looks great, I can't wait to get started!" said Tamara Levy, a 6th former from Fife, who is taking part in the project as part of her gold Duke of Edinburgh award. Amanda Hyams, originally from Edinburgh and now studying at the University of Strathclyde, told us: "I helped my grandparents skype family members and friends in Manchester and it really made a difference to their life. I really enjoyed it, and I think I'll really enjoy getting involved in this project."

For more information in how you can get involved in 'Jewish Inter-Links', now or in the future, contact Project Worker Fiona Frank, details below.



SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE. 222 FENWICK ROAD, GLASGOW G46 6UE

0141-638 6411 07887-488100 scoiec@scoiec.org

**OUTREACH & EVENTS** FIONA 0777-920 6522 jewishinscotland@scojec.org POLICY & RESEARCH **I FAH** 0141-404 6264 info@scoiec.org

#### **Contacts in the Corners**

**GLASGOW** IULIA 0141-577 8200 office@glasgowjewishrepcouncil.org **EDINBURGH** 07734-291 836 **IACKIE** secretary@ehcong.com BILL **DUNDEE** 07503-188 987 jewishdundee@gmail.com ABERDEEN **FHUD** 07810 - 024 456 info@aberdeenhebrew.org.uk **SMALL COMMUNITIES** SHARON 0141-638 6411 communities@scojec.org STUDENTS YOSSI & SARAH 07791 - 292790 vossi@mvchaplaincv.co.uk

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN FOUR CORNERS ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHOR, NOT NECESSARILY OF SCOJEC © SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION NO SC029438