

BOARD PRESIDENT VIVIAN WINEMAN IS PIPED INTO DINNER;
THE BOARD MEETING IN GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS.



CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF THE **Edinburgh 'Lit'**

CHARLES RAAB

The 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society ('The Lit') was celebrated in great style in March with a symposium entitled *Enlightening Jews?*. More than 100 people enjoyed a full day of lectures, discussions, audiovisual displays, and reflection on a wide variety of topics and themes.

Preceded a few days earlier by a highly illuminating lecture on the current Israeli-Palestinian situation given by the journalist Jonathan Freedland, the symposium followed the Lit's tradition, offering literary, philosophical, historical, current affairs, musical, and culinary presentations by an impressive list of visiting and local speakers, as well as panelists who discussed *Being Jewish in the 21st Century*. There was plenty to debate, think about, and take away for further investigation and enjoyment, and there was a display of Tony Gilbert's imaginative posters relating to Lit talks in previous years. The culmination of the day was a special showing of Diana Groó's film, *Regina*, the moving story of the world's first female Rabbi, after which its producer Georg Weisz led a discussion about the making and significance of the film.

Those who attended the anniversary symposium left with a sense that the venerable Lit remains a vibrant Edinburgh institution, with an appeal beyond its borders, that will continue to mount annual programmes of fascinating talks and events far into the future.

SPEAKER PANEL L TO R: DAVID ROSE,
MARK SOLOMON, GILLIAN RAAB,
AND NATAN LEVY.

Board of Deputies CELEBRATES GLASGOW CENTENARY

One of the first events in the centenary year of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council was, appropriately, the annual regional meeting of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The Rep Council has a long way to go to match the Board's venerable 250 years, but when it was established in 1914 in the aftermath of the notorious Beilis blood libel, Glasgow set a pattern that has since been followed by all but the smallest communities.

Some 60 Deputies received a warm welcome at a full weekend of events, starting with a communal Friday night dinner at Giffnock Synagogue. Every shul made a kiddush in their honour, and after Shabbat, East Renfrewshire Council held a civic reception to mark the centenary of the Representative Council. On Sunday morning, the Board's plenary meeting was held in the splendour of Glasgow City Chambers, where the Deputies were welcomed by Bailie John McLaughlin, deputising for the Lord Provost, and Rep Council president, Paul Morron. Board Vice-President Jonathan Arkush commented: "The Glasgow Jewish community is exactly what a Jewish community should be."

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The
Scottish Council
of Jewish
Communities

www.scojec.org

THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND



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"Something completely different", and "a rich and complex story, well told" was how the judges described Tracey Rosenberg's poem, Shabbat in the Rockies, which won the Mountaineering Council of Scotland's poetry prize in December 2013.

Shabbat in the Rockies

TRACEY ROSENBERG

For the last time, we light candles on the windowsill
and scoop our hands to greet the Shabbat queen.
Never again will the shadowed Carpathians glower at two tiny flames
straining to spread their light. Never again will we flee to the cold crevices,
escaping the screams: *Kill the Christ-killers! Kill the Yids!*

We wrap our treasures in the velvet cloth that should hold two braided loaves.
We push them deep into a bundle and carry them west.
How confused they must be, our candlesticks, though they once stood
bold as brassy servant girls and upright as virtuous women!

Now they shake and bump on a train. Now they sway and dip,
riding an ocean of cruel, watery uproar where our highest climbs plunge
faster than our stomachs empty over the ship's side.

Within a covered wagon, they jolt heads like dummkopfs
smacked by a drunken teacher cursing their ignorance –
but what can they know, these now-dumb candlesticks, in a land so flat
you can stand on an upturned barrel and gaze on the end of the world?
Once a week they cower on the wagon's wood bench.
The sky is a too-large bowl. No light can illuminate a void.

In the city, they huddle on a shelf, sneered at by painted plates.
A town boy grabs our hats and shouts *where are your horns, devil Jews?*
"There," we cry, pointing over the roof to the horizon's peaks.
No one can snatch away the snow caps gleaming on their heads.

On a rough board which will become a windowsill
we set the candlesticks. Two flames dance up,
unfolding their fingers of light. The mountains lean forward,
gazing in wonder, and nod heavy greetings.
The curious eagles scream. We open our arms
to the light and the mountains, and welcome the Shabbat queen.

Reading Together

A New Kind of Dialogue

MICHAEL WILSON
PROJECT MANAGER, INTERFAITH GLASGOW

The people "reading together" at St Mungo's Museum in Glasgow were not just a book group but were participating in an exciting new method of interfaith dialogue known as Scriptural Reasoning.



Hosted by Interfaith Glasgow, 19 people from the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities participated in this stimulating activity, focusing on scriptural readings about Abraham's hospitality, a theme common to all three religions. Sarah Snyder from the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, introduced Scriptural Reasoning as a way that people can share with one another how they "reason" with the text, and apply it to modern life.

This is not intended to encourage participants to agree, but to be an enriching and enjoyable way of increasing understanding of one another's beliefs, and of developing friendships. The dialogue usually takes place between members of the Abrahamic faiths (although it is now being extended to other faith and ideological groups), and it has proved extremely successful with lay people as well as religious leaders and academics.

There are Scriptural Reasoning groups across the UK and further afield, but could it work in Glasgow? The overwhelming feeling is – yes it can! In the next few months Interfaith Glasgow is looking forward to supporting new Scriptural Reasoning groups in Glasgow, so if you would like to "read together," please just let us know, info@interfaithglasgow.org. More information about Scriptural Reasoning can be found on www.scripturalreasoning.org.

Promoting Jewish Volunteering

SCoJeC is delighted to have been awarded a £30,000 grant by the Voluntary Action Fund for a 'cluster' project to work with three other organisations – the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, and Sukkot Shalom, Edinburgh's Liberal Jewish Community – to help to recruit, train, and support Jewish volunteers in Scotland.

There are four strands to the project:

■ Supporting existing volunteers

SCoJeC will provide training for the army of volunteers that all our partner organisations rely on to survive.

■ Improving information about Judaism

Many people are asked to give talks about Judaism to their local school or community group, or to show visiting parties around a synagogue, and others would love to do so if they felt more confident. As well as recruiting new people, this project will provide training and support, bring volunteers together to share expertise and resources, and help design new materials. The Glasgow Jewish Representative Council will coordinate this strand of the project, and the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre will provide training on the history of Jewish immigration to Scotland, as well as recruiting and training new volunteers themselves.

■ Linking people up online across Scotland

SCoJeC's CoNNeCT online discussion forum, which includes a book group, and discussion of a 'monthly topic of interest', is now fully up and running. We are now looking for volunteer facilitators and moderators to help make sure that the conversation stays interesting, current, and safe, and to make sure the new communal directory and calendar which will be soon be available on the Rep Council website are kept up to date.

■ Looking outwards – supporting refugees and immigrants in Edinburgh

Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Jewish Liberal community, is reaching out to support refugees and new immigrants to Edinburgh. Martha Harding from the Scottish Refugee Council spoke at their Friday night gathering in May, and there's a training programme in preparation to support new volunteers. And as part of the Scottish Refugee Council Arts Week, SCoJeC is supporting a Writing Workshop on the themes of 'incoming' and 'welcome'. This will take place in Edinburgh on 29 June, with three Jewish writers: J David Simons, Ellen Galford, and Tracey Rosenberg (whose award winning poem is featured above left).

For more information contact Fiona Frank, fiona@scojec.org or 07779 206 522.

Chief Rabbi IN SCOTLAND

The new Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, has visited Scotland twice in the last month, first to attend the Church of Scotland General Assembly as the guest of the Lord High Commissioner, the Earl of Wessex, and then to lead *Time for Reflection* in the Parliament. On both occasions he addressed packed communal meetings, and SCoJeC introduced him to the leaders of all the political parties and other faith leaders.

Speaking immediately after prayers, which he later described as being surrounded by a 900-strong choir, Chief Rabbi Mirvis made history as the first Rabbi (and only the third Jew) to address the General Assembly. His opening remarks reduced the entire Assembly to gales of laughter, and he then spoke of "the close and harmonious relationship that the Jewish Community had enjoyed with the Church of Scotland", and celebrated how "Scotland is enriched by its faith communities". However, he also directly addressed the strain on Jewish-Christian relations caused when last year's General Assembly adopted a report attacking central Jewish belief about the land of Israel in politically loaded, factually inaccurate, and offensive terms, and rejected two amendments calling for dialogue with the Jewish Community. The Chief Rabbi was warmly applauded, and in response, the Moderator made a commitment to continue respectful dialogue, which he set in motion when they met again at the Parliament.

During his second visit, SCoJeC arranged a lunch in the Parliament attended by the chairs of all Scotland's Jewish communities, MSPs of all parties, and a cross-section of Scotland's faith communities. Accompanied by Ephraim Borowski and Nicola Livingston from SCoJeC, Rabbi Mirvis also held private meetings with the First Minister and the leaders of all the Scottish political parties, at which he

commended the role of SCoJeC as the representative voice of the Jewish Community of Scotland, and said his favourite quote from our *Being Jewish in Scotland* survey was, "I count myself incredibly lucky to be Scottish and Jewish".

ABOVE: CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS LEADS TIME FOR REFLECTION IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT; WITH THE FIRST MINISTER. BELOW LEFT (TOP TO BOTTOM) WITH JOHANN LAMONT (LABOUR LEADER); PATRICK HARVIE (GREEN CO-LEADER); THE PRESIDING OFFICER, TRICIA MARWICK; THE MODERATOR. CENTRE: WITH THE FIRST MINISTER; RUTH DAVIDSON (CONSERVATIVE LEADER); WILLIE RENNIE (LIB DEM LEADER). RIGHT: SPEAKING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT; WITH MRS MIRVIS, THE MODERATOR AND THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF WESSEX,



Calendar

The "Three Weeks" between the Fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av are a time of mourning for the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 586 BCE, and the second by the Romans in 70 CE.

Fast of Tammuz
dawn till nightfall 15 July

Fast of Av (Tisha b'Av)
evening 4 till
nightfall 5 Aug

The Three Weeks

ISAAC ANSELL FORSYTH

A few weeks ago, I was sitting at a bus stop in Edinburgh when a lady wearing a hijab kindly offered me an all-day ticket, as for some reason she had bought an extra one. She noticed that I had some Semitic headgear of my own, and we struck up a quite fascinating conversation.

It happened that she was from Sudan, though had been living in Scotland for a number of years now. She was apologetic about her broken English, but I told her that her English was far better than my Arabic anyway.

We reflected on similarities between our religious traditions, including the similar obligations of charity (*zakat* in Arabic, *tzedakah* in Hebrew), prayer, dietary laws, and our non-Gregorian calendars. There are of course some differences, which interested us both.

She said that lots of people that she knows think Jews are evil, but added that they had probably never met or talked to a Jew. "Not me though," she said proudly, "because now I know a Jew!"

There is something quite special about the power of human contact and dialogue. Through these means, opportunities arise to share information, break down barriers, and build positive relationships. Perhaps most importantly, we find the opportunity to empathise.

This concept – the potential power of speech – is actually quite central in Judaism. On the one hand, we find numerous teachings of the destructive power of *lashon hara* (negative speech), and on the other, the potential greatness to be gained through of *lashon hatov* (positive speech). *Lashon hatov* could include providing education, praising a colleague who has done something well, comforting a friend in a time of need, or even engaging in a constructive conversation with a stranger.

On Tisha B'av and the three week lead-up period starting with the Fast of Tammuz, there is a lot of focus on *lashon hara* as one of the contributing factors to adverse events in Jewish history, and especially the destruction of the two Temples, which is what Tisha B'av commemorates. Perhaps then this period is also an appropriate time to focus on *lashon hatov* and the positives it could bring – like gaining a new Sudanese friend!

UNITED AGAINST Hate Crime



SCoJeC is proud to be at the forefront of Scotland's response to the tide of racism, xenophobia, and religious hatred that has swept Europe in the recent elections. Although antisemitism is obviously our first concern – especially in light of the Anti-Defamation league poll showing that as many as 69% hold antisemitic attitudes in some European countries – we are also concerned about hate crime in general.

Almost exactly a year ago, SCoJeC, supported by the Church of Scotland, issued a statement of solidarity with the mainstream Muslim community, who were being demonised and held responsible for actions that were not theirs in the aftermath of the appalling murder of Gunner Rigby in Woolwich. More recently, we have given presentations to the Lord Advocate's conference on hate crime, participated in a round table with Tell Mama (the Muslim equivalent of the Community Security Trust), and contributed to the planning of the Scottish Government's new "Speak Up Against Hate Crime" campaign.

Last month, SCoJeC Director, Ephraim Borowski, shared a platform with Baroness Doreen Lawrence at a packed conference on "Tackling the barriers to reporting prejudice and hate crime" organised by the Scottish Alliance of Regional Equality Councils (SAREC), giving several examples of antisemitic incidents we were told about during our recent Scottish Government funded *Being Jewish in Scotland* project. Most of these are never reported, because the victims regard antisemitism as "just a fact of life", or they don't think the authorities will take it seriously, or they fear reprisals, or they are too traumatised to want to relive the experience.

Ephraim commended the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for their successful prosecution of a student who attacked a colleague in his own bed for daring to have an Israeli flag on the wall, and of a number of people who had posted antisemitic messages on the newspaper comment pages or Facebook. As a result the Court of Appeal has ruled that opposition to Israeli government actions in the Middle East can never be a cover for racist hate crime in Scotland.

Ephraim also took issue with those who see racism only in terms of skin colour, citing the chair of an ethnic minority advocacy organisation who said that "It's Polish people's own fault if they're attacked – if they just keep their mouths shut then because they're white, no-one will know they're not Scottish." On another occasion, someone was told by a supposedly anti-racist organisation that "an attack on a Jewish teenager to taunts of 'f-ing Jew' etc couldn't be racist because the victim was white". After the event, Ephraim said he was particularly gratified by the number of participants, including several Africans, who said how much his talk had resonated with them, because this gives added support to his thesis that it is not skin colour but "otherness" that lies at the core of the shared experience of hate crime in Scotland.

L TO R: EPHRAIM BOROWSKI (BEMIS CHAIR), SUPT GAVIN PHILIP (SAFER COMMUNITIES, POLICE SCOTLAND), BARONESS DOREEN LAWRENCE, ELEANOR MCKNIGHT (CEMVO DIRECTOR), AND SHAMI KHAN (SAREC VICE-CHAIR).

Join in the discussion

and CoNNeCT with Jewish people throughout Scotland on SCoJeC's exciting new online discussion forum!

★ BOOK CLUB

★ JEWISH COOKERY

★ IVRIT SECTION

★ EVENTS AROUND JEWISH SCOTLAND

www.scojec.org/discussion/forum

★ AND MORE!





Fire & Light in the Forest

SCoJeC's LaG b'Omer extravaganza really lived up to its name! More than 170 people from Glasgow, Edinburgh, and much further afield – including nearly 100 children – had a really fantastic time at Vogrie Country Park, making (and using!) bows and arrows, listening to story-tellers, playing with fire (or at least watching an expert), and just messing around in the woods.

The activities included willow craft, wild food and campfire cooking, storytelling, making dream catchers, walking, and pond dipping. One of the biggest hits was making bows and arrows, and the children (and some grown-ups) were able to try out their creations during an archery competition. Also very popular was a session on learning how to make a fire in the woods. After working up a healthy appetite, everyone was ready to enjoy the barbecue while watching Tom the Fire Juggler.

Rabbi Eli had no problem getting a minyan for Minchah, and after the service in the beautiful forest setting, he gave a talk about the meaning of Lag b'Omer.

This was nearly three times bigger than our previous biggest event – and everyone agreed it was definitely three times as much fun! "I absolutely loved the fact that the various communities came together in such a harmonious way", said one participant, "the kids were in seventh heaven with the variety of activities on offer", and another commented, "This was a superb day, great activities on offer, brilliantly organised – and it was an all-round resounding success!"

The event was a collaboration between SCoJeC and Enjoy (the youth wing of the Glasgow orthodox synagogues) and Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, and was very generously supported by the Forestry Commission Scotland, Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable Trust, and the Jewish Youth Fund (Glasgow).

"It's wonderful having SCoJeC celebrating Judaism in all its diversity"

Mitzvah Day

**MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE –
GET INVOLVED WITH MITZVAH DAY 2014!**

Mitzvah Day, which this year takes place on Sunday 16 November, is the largest day of faith-led social action in the UK, and the Jewish community is proud to work in partnership with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i, and other faith communities to carry out hands-on social action side-by-side. The project galvanises participants regardless of age, faith, gender, affiliation, or level of wealth to give their time, not money, to build stronger local communities. The vision is to reduce hardship and poverty, to help our environment, and to bring a little joy where it is needed. On Mitzvah Day, participants visit the elderly, clear up outdoor spaces, cook or collect food for the homeless, pack gift bags for children in need, or run another project, all of which build genuine connections between local communities and charities.

A series of webinars, which will take place over the summer, will help organisers to hear about new initiatives and projects, get advice about setting up Mitzvah Day activities, and discuss ideas with others.

For details, please contact elliott@mitzvahday.org.uk or 020 3747 9960.

Dates for your Diary!



EDINBURGH'S Ongoing Dialogue

The Edinburgh Jewish Dialogue was set up to look at future options for the city's Jewish community, interpreted widely to include anyone in the area with a Jewish connection.

Following an initial meeting in June 2013, speakers from elsewhere have visited Edinburgh to speak about their communities. Following Jesmond Blumenfeld on Oxford, Clive Lawton on London (and the world!), and SCoJeC's Fiona Frank, the most recent meeting welcomed Lena Posner-Körösi, President of the Stockholm Jewish Community. In Lena's entertaining and informative talk, she explained that in Stockholm "you don't join a synagogue, you join a community" – you pay one membership fee, which entitles you to attend cultural events, youth facilities, and a Jewish school, as well as services at any of the three synagogues. Interestingly, the membership fee is not fixed but is set at 1.2% of annual salary – information which is openly available in Sweden, but which most people in the audience felt would not be acceptable in Scotland!

All three visitors have given the strong message – which is also central to SCoJeC's volunteering "cluster project" (see p.2) – that, with vision, willingness, and a lot of hard work, Jews from different backgrounds and different levels of religious observance can come together to make Judaism relevant.

The Edinburgh Jewish Dialogue is grateful to SCoJeC for their support for this initiative. For more information contact mundy.janet@gmail.com.



Cultural Connections

**A FESTIVAL OF JEWISH ARTS AND CULTURE,
AYR, 26 JULY TO 22 SEPTEMBER 2014**

SCoJeC is very pleased to be working in partnership with the Maclaurin Gallery and Rozelle House in Ayr, on a *Festival of Jewish Arts and Culture* to run throughout this summer, in association with the Ben Uri Gallery, London.

The festival will include an exhibition of drawings, paintings, and sculpture by Josef Herman, Benno Schotz, and Hannah Frank, as well as *Scots Jews*, the photography exhibition by Judah Passow that featured in the last edition of *Four Corners*, and a full programme of arts and cultural events both inside and outside the gallery.

There will be an opening reception on the afternoon of July 27, and full details of all the activities accompanying the show will be listed on SCoJeC's online noticeboard from the beginning of July.

ABOVE LEFT: PREPARING HANNAH FRANK'S
ARTWORKS FOR THE EXHIBITION



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