

Scotland's Jewish Gathering



They came from the north and the south, they came from the east and the west! More than 150 Jewish people from all over Scotland – from the Western Isles and the Grampians to Galloway, from all strands of Judaism and none, aged from 3 to 83 – converged on Edinburgh Synagogue and Community Centre over the weekend of 26th to 28th October for a programme of inspiring speakers, rousing music, stimulating discussion – and just getting to know one another better.

Guest speakers included Board of Deputies vice-president Edwin Shuker, who had fled from Baghdad just before his bar mitzvah and spoke emotionally about his gratitude that he lives in a country where the Jewish community can thrive. Scottish Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf, speaking after news of the atrocity in Pittsburgh had broken, expressed sympathy and solidarity with the victims and with Jewish people throughout the world, and reiterated the Scottish Government's commitment "to tackle prejudice and build the society we want to be, where each person, every family, and all communities can flourish."

The programme included a special open meeting of SCoJEC's Council, and there were also discussions on tackling demographic change, women in Judaism, mental health, Jewish schools, fundraising, and the use of technology and social media. There was a stirring candle-lit musical Havdalah, a sing-along klezmer session, and separate activities for the 20 children aged 3 to 16. The final session was an unprecedented panel of the chairs of all Scotland's Jewish communities, whose discussion of the challenges and opportunities facing them quickly turned into agreement that what they have in common hugely outweighs their differences of geography and affiliation.

John Danzig of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, who chaired the organising committee, said that "the Gathering captured interest in a way we had not imagined. It created a sense of identity, strengthened communal ties, reflected that there is unity through diversity, and raised the profile of Jewish Scotland. The *ruach* [atmosphere] was lovely and sometimes brought tears to my eyes."

Giffnock's Rabbi Moshe Rubin commented that the four corner entrances of Edinburgh shul were like Abraham's tent, open on all sides, and that this symbolised the purpose and achievement of the Gathering.

Glasgow Jewish Representative Council co-president Evy Yedd said: "The atmosphere was just beautiful, with everyone joining in with the singing. It really was something special. To witness friendships being formed by Jews young and old from all parts of Scotland has been an uplifting experience I will never forget. We can't wait for the next Gathering weekend!"



The
Scottish Council
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www.scojec.org

THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND

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As a representative of Eastwood, with Scotland's highest Jewish population, I had always intended to visit democratic Israel. Convening the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Building Bridges with Israel allowed that in August, with MSP colleagues from the SNP, Scottish Labour, and fellow Scottish Conservatives.

The importance of Israel to Eastwood could not have been better highlighted by hearing the Scottish voice of a constituent when visiting the 'Save a Child's Heart' organisation, "You're my MSP!" she said.

Beginning at Yad Vashem, we took in all of Israeli and Palestinian society. I was especially heartened with conversations we had with many young adults who reiterated they were committed to peace.

This need for a lasting peace was brought home to me when we met with Abie Moses and his organisation for victims of terrorism. His story is heart-breaking. Having had his family brutally killed before his eyes, he is now committed to advocating for peace. I hope the Cross Party Group will be able to host Abie and his organisation in late 2019.

Mary Fee, Scottish Labour MSP for West of Scotland, comments: *"I was delighted to take part in the visit to Israel and the West Bank. Every visit and meeting helped to give me a real understanding of the issues faced by both the Jewish and the Palestinian people. The visit to the Golan Heights and our visit to Haifa were of particular interest. I was encouraged by our visit to Rawabi, a vibrant new city, and to hear of the tangible work being done to help build cooperation, clearly demonstrating that by working together, progress can be made to allow both countries to live together."*

Richard Lyle MSP, the SNP Deputy Convenor of the Cross Party Group echoes this: *"I was very pleased to take part in the visit to Israel and the West Bank. Each day was packed with visits to various sites meeting numerous groups of Jewish, Palestinian, and other nationalities. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv were especially vibrant and we were able to experience our visit never feeling unsafe and always able to talk to whom we wished. I was pleased with our visit to Rawabi seeing what can be done by Palestinians who wish to establish by themselves a very impressive new city in the West Bank. Only by working together can Palestinians and the Jewish people make this region more prosperous and hopefully, the establishment of two countries living in peace with each other."*

MSPs visit ISRAEL

JACKSON CARLAW MSP



ABOVE, MSPs AT THE WESTERN WALL, L TO R:

JACKSON CARLAW MSP (CON), CONVENOR OF CPG ON BUILDING BRIDGES WITH ISRAEL; MURDO FRASER MSP (CON); RICHARD LYLE MSP (SNP), VICE CONVENOR OF CPG; MARY FEE MSP (LAB); BILL BOWMAN MSP (CON); RUTH KENNEDY, DIRECTOR OF CENTRE FOR SCOTLAND AND ISRAEL RELATIONS; MAURICE CORRY MSP (CON); AND THEIR ISRAELI TOUR GUIDE.

LEFT: IN TEL AVIV WITH ABIE MOSES, (CENTRE, SPEAKING), CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISATION OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF NATAL, A TERROR-RELATED TRAUMA TREATMENT AND RESILIENCE ORGANISATION.



Vision Schools Award

Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary School was one of the schools honoured by the Vision Schools Programme for demonstrating sustainability, commitment, and good practice in Holocaust Education. At a ceremony in the Scottish Parliament, Lord Pickles, UK special envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, presented certificates and spoke about the importance of education in combatting prejudice and denial.



Praying for Victory?

When Scotland played Israel in an exciting Nations League qualifying match at Hampden in November, the picture that captured most attention on social media wasn't of the action on the field, but of well-known Israeli Rabbi Zeev Leff from Moshav Matityahu, who was visiting his family in Glasgow. We can confirm that he was not studying the Talmudic commentators in the hope of a lenient ruling on the offside rule!

PRAYERS FOR Pittsburgh



Scottish Government Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell, the Interim Leader of the Scottish Conservatives, representatives of the main churches, Muslim communities, and other faith groups, local authorities, and the police, joined the Community in Giffnock Synagogue to pay

their respects to the victims of the mass murder of Jewish people in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Prayers were read and candles lit by representatives of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and Garnethill, Newton Mearns, and Glasgow Reform synagogues.

In a powerful address, Rabbi Moshe Rubin, Senior Rabbi in Scotland, said he would not call the murderer a monster, *"because that excuses his actions. He was a man, but he refused to see the human being, created in the image of God, instead he was blinded by hate of the Jew. ... I pray and hope for a time when we celebrate difference, a time when difference doesn't blind us but rather it binds us and unites us."*

Memorial services were also held in Glasgow's George Square (top left), and in Edinburgh Synagogue (above).

Humza Yousaf, Justice Secretary:

"Utterly awful attack in Pittsburgh today. Thoughts with the Jewish Community here, who I know will be feeling much pain at such an act of evil."

Ken Macintosh, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament:

"Sending the thoughts, prayers and support of the Members of the Scottish Parliament and the people of Scotland to the family and friends of those killed and injured. ... The rise in antisemitism is a threat to us all."

Jackson Carlaw MSP, Interim Conservative Leader:

"Standing in grief and solidarity with Scotland's Jewish community in the face of this cruel and terrifying act. Antisemitism remains a constant threat that must be confronted and defeated with actions as well as words."

Rev George Whyte, Principal Clerk, Church of Scotland:

"... truly dreadful. I cannot begin to imagine how this brings increased fear to the Jewish community. Thoughts and prayers at this difficult time."

Dr Muhammad Adrees, Chair, Muslim Council of Scotland:

"The Muslim community is shocked to know of the killing of the innocent Jewish community worshippers. We share the grief of our Jewish community."

Rami Ousta, Chief Executive of BEMIS:

"This tragedy should be a reminder for us all how antisemitism is criminal and immoral, and let the Tree of Life Synagogue symbolise a new hope for us, as human beings, becoming united with love for each other always and always."

First Minister VISITS AUSCHWITZ

The First Minister visited Auschwitz with a group of 200 students and teachers from across Scotland as part of the Holocaust Educational Trust's *Lessons from Auschwitz* Project. They visited the barracks and crematoria and

lit candles at the Birkenau killing centre in memory of the six million Jews and others killed by the Nazis.

Reflecting on her visit at First Minister's Questions, and again at the annual Faith Leader's Summit, she said:

"It had a profound impact on me, and I know from watching the reactions of the young people that it had a profound impact on them too."

"It is not just a history lesson. The Holocaust did not start in Auschwitz, Birkenau or any of the concentration camps; it started in everyday antisemitism and discrimination and the othering and dehumanising of Jews. That is the lesson that we must learn and apply in our modern lives ... as we do everything we can to ensure that those horrors cannot be allowed to happen again."



Students have a Ball

Jewish Student Chaplains, Yossi and Sarah Bodenheimer (top) and their signature cotton candy machine, with students at the St Andrews Jewish Student Ball, and (bottom) with the founder members of the first ever Jewish Society at Heriot Watt University.



Panel on Antisemitism

The West of Scotland branch of the Council of Christians and Jews held a meeting on "Antisemitism: Why is it still an issue, and what can we do about it?" The main speaker was Mark Gardner of the Community Security Trust, and there was a panel discussion (pictured) with Mirella Yandoli from the Church of Scotland, SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski, and Rev Maggie McTernan of the Scottish Episcopal Church.



Dumfries Shmooze

SCoJeC's latest event in Dumfries was an afternoon with prize-winning author, Yiddishist Ellen Galford, who used amusing reminiscences and anecdotes to illustrate her family's journey from Eastern Europe to New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. This led one member of the audience to talk about how her family had hidden Jews during the Holocaust, and others to reveal how they, or members of their families, had only discovered that they had Jewish heritage late in life.



Aberdeen Talk

Author Tracey S Rosenberg, winner of Scottish Book Trust's New Writers Award, visited Aberdeen to talk about *The Western Wall*, her new short story written in response to Muriel Spark's novella, *The Mandelbaum Gate*. Tracey's story examines some of the contradictions inherent in modern Jewish identity, and prompted members of the audience to write their own 'flash fiction' on the theme of Jewish identity.



Glasgow Schools

SCoJeC's Volunteer Educational Ambassador Margalit Borowski visited Battlefield Primary in Glasgow to speak to pupils about the Torah, and pupils then worked together to make and decorate their own scrolls.



SCoJeC

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