



Jewish Students meet the First Minister

SCoJeC was delighted to provide Jewish students in Scotland with an opportunity to raise issues that matter to them with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP.

To set the scene before the First Minister spoke, two third year students shared their experiences of being a Jewish student in Scotland. Toby, an Accounting and Finance student at the University of Strathclyde, shared his concerns about the rise of antisemitism on university campuses, and told us later, *"I think the evening was crucially important, to have the opportunity to share our personal experiences being Jewish students in Scotland with someone of such high power and status as the First Minister, especially in times of rampant antisemitism."*

Abel, a Psychology student at the University of Glasgow, told the First Minister of his concerns about education in Scotland, and his desire for the general public to be aware of the Holocaust. He later commented, *"As a Jewish student, my peers and I often feel overlooked, that is why I greatly appreciate the First Minister taking time to talk to us and answer our questions head on. Even though this does not solve the grand issues we face, it does assure me that our voices can be heard. Thank you to SCoJeC for organising this event!"*

During the hour-long question and answer session, many students raised concerns about antisemitism on campuses, and the First Minister pledged to remain steadfast in her support of Jewish students by making campuses a safer place, saying *"universities are part of broader society ... zero tolerance of antisemitism has to be as enforced and as strongly held on our university campuses as it is in any other part of our society."*

The First Minister also reasserted her commitment to tackling all forms of hatred within the SNP, saying,

"I accept the responsibility to make sure that we always learn and seek not to fall short on these issues." She noted that the SNP has adopted the widely-accepted working definition of antisemitism, and acknowledged concerns raised by many students that the Green Party has not done so, but promised that all the Ministers in her Government, including those from the Green Party, are expected to comply with the definition.

She said there is *"a duty on all of us to understand"* the importance of Israel to the Jewish community, and discussed ways that Scotland and Israel can come together, noting in particular her conversations during COP26 about Israel's success with their vaccination programme.

Eden, a fourth year student at the University of the West of Scotland, commented *"It was an enlightening experience to see the voices of Jewish students heard by such an important figure within Scotland."*

SCoJeC Chair Nicola Livingston, who is also a former Chair of Jewish Student Chaplaincy Scotland, said *"We are pleased that the First Minister continues to engage with the Jewish community, and this event provided an opportunity for the issues that truly matter to our students to be raised with her. I thank her for her honesty, and I look forward to welcoming her to another event in the near future."*

Centenerian at Centennial

Arthur Lawson MBE, a former President of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council and national Chairman of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, who is in his 100th year, laid the wreath at the Cenotaph in Whitehall during the 100th Anniversary AJEX parade.



ISSUE 72 • SPRING 2022 • PURIM 5782

 Scottish Council
of Jewish
Communities

www.SCoJeC.org

REPRESENTING, CONNECTING, AND SUPPORTING
JEWISH PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND



facebook.com/scojec



twitter.com/scojec



youtube.com/c/scojec



Tu b'Shvat in Kirkcaldy

SCoJeC joined forces with UJIA, Scottish Forestry, and Operation Play Outdoors for an afternoon of tree-themed activities in celebration of Tu b'Shvat, the 'New Year for Trees'.

UJIA's Senior Educator, Sydney Switzer, spoke about the religious significance of Tu b'Shvat, which marked the beginning of spring in ancient Israel, the end of one agricultural year, and the beginning of the next. It has significance for many of the religious agricultural laws, such as the timing of separating the tithes to be taken and eaten in Jerusalem. Today some of these rules are still observed in Israel, and many people also celebrate Tu b'Shvat by planting trees, participating in outdoor activities, and eating a 'seder' of fruit and nuts.

Families from Pittenweem to Glasgow joined us at Dunnikier Park in Kirkcaldy where the team from Operation Play Outdoors laid on a series of fun activities. We built dens from rope, tarpaulin, and natural materials found in the woods, roasted hotdogs and toasted marshmallows around the campfire, learned to identify trees from their shape and that of their leaves, and, to round off the afternoon, we planted trees in compostable cups to take back home. Four larger trees were planted in pots and given to representatives of different cities around Scotland.

"It was lovely to see families from across Scotland coming together in the wonderful wilderness of Kirkcaldy and learning about Tu b'Shvat", said one participant, and another commented on the excitement of being able to meet up with other Jewish families to learn more about and celebrate Jewish culture.

Resource

NEW IN
SCOTLAND!

Helping the community
into employment

Resource, the Jewish community's go-to resource helping people get into employment, is now available in Scotland as the organisation is taking advantage of new video opportunities, including Teams and Zoom, to 'meet' with clients anywhere in the country.

Resource works with clients to boost their confidence and build their skills, empowering them to find and secure the right job. Their highly skilled, professional volunteers and their team of staff support over 1,000 people yearly in their job search. Thanks to the support of their donors all their services are free. Dedicated advisors give each client expert advice and guidance, tailoring their journey which can comprise one-to-one support, workshops and webinars. Their clients come from every walk of life, occupation, and profession, regardless of religious observance.

And now with the move to online support, anyone, wherever they are, aged from 18 to 80, who is looking for work, wanting to change career or returning to the workplace after taking time out, can get on-screen interactive, guidance from Resource's experienced, professional advisors.

They can participate in specialist webinars to access help with every aspect of job searching, such as using LinkedIn and other social media. They can learn to make the most of networking to locate work opportunities, prepare an effective CV, improve their use of IT, and be guided through their interview skills.

How well does it work? One client, a head of financial advice for a major savings and investment company recently wrote to Resource: "I just want to say how impressed I am with the way you have transitioned to the new world. The Zoom seminars were well-run and together with the Zoom meetings with my advisor, they kept me motivated in my job search - difficult in a lockdown when few are hiring. Your move to the digital world so successfully made a huge difference to me and I am sure, to many other clients."

Another commented: "I found Resource not only practically helpful, but very uplifting. Having been job hunting for months by the time I started working with Resource, my confidence had taken a dip. It was strongly rebuilt by my experience with Resource, and I would recommend the service to anyone looking for work, whatever their background."

For more details or to book an appointment, visit Resource at: www.resource-centre.org or call: 020 8346 4000

Fiona's Top Twenty



SCoJeC's former Projects and Outreach Manager was honoured by *Jewish Renaissance* magazine as one of their "Top Twenty" cultural influencers, to celebrate their 20th Anniversary as the UK's only Jewish cultural magazine. This accolade was in recognition of her dedication to promoting Jewish culture in Scotland, as well as her work to bring klezmer to the Lake District. *Mazal tov* to both Fiona and *Jewish Renaissance*!!

Fiona, who has returned as Project Consultant for SCoJeC's ground-breaking "Jewish Scotland Connected" project, also attended the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow with *Sustaining All Life*, an international organisation that seeks to remove long-standing divisions between people and nations. She managed the technical side of all the group's hybrid events, and helped organise an online workshop on Jews and Climate Justice, together with participants from the US, Israel, and New Zealand. Thanks to the skills learned from Jewish Scotland Connected, the wonders of modern technology enabled a Chilean activist to speak in Spanish to a live audience in Glasgow and a virtual audience around the world, with the help of two interpreters who were based in London and Mexico, and three typists from around the UK who took turns to transcribe the proceedings!

Fiona also participated in Garnethill Synagogue's Eco-Shabbat service during COP26, which was attended by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, as well as representatives from other faith communities, and devoted special attention to the environment, climate control, and our responsibilities as Jewish people to be mindful of how our actions can impact on the world around us.



Remembrance

EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

There's an old – and, I admit, not very funny – adage about all Jewish festivals being summed up as, "They tried to kill us. They failed. Let's party!" OK, it's partly true – clichés have to be or they wouldn't last long enough to become clichés! – but it conceals a more complex truth. Some festivals celebrate our survival as a people, while others celebrate the survival of our religion. Or to put it in more modern terms, some bigots direct their murderous hatred at other religions, some at other races. And of course sometimes it's difficult to disentangle the motivation, not least because looking for reasons presupposes rationality but hatred is by its nature irrational!

Of course partying is not the only form of remembrance – fasting is another, and Judaism has no shortage of those, sometimes in tandem with a party, but mainly days of solemn commemoration of past tragedies. The most solemn of these is Tisha b'Av, the 9th of Av, in mid-summer, which marks the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem first by the Babylonians more than 2,600 years ago and then again by the Romans in the year 70. Those were both cataclysmic events for the Jewish religion, and the Talmud can be read as the working out, over hundreds of years, of how it could survive in people's minds and bodies without its solid physical base in Jerusalem.

Tisha b'Av has come to commemorate other disasters too, so it is not surprising that some also dedicate it to remembering the annihilation of the vast majority of the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust, a genocidal obsession that both contributed to and was only brought to an end by the defeat of the Nazis. The world commemorates this on International Holocaust Memorial Day in January, but that is not a date in the Jewish calendar. It is not a Jewish event, nor even an event about Jews. It recalls events in which Jewish people participated, but only as the most numerous of the victims, so it is appropriate that that Jewish Community's voice be heard. But it was established by the United Nations in 2006 as an international, secular, event marking the lowest level of degradation to which humanity – if that is not an ironic term in this context – can stoop, and has stooped.

For far longer – since 1951 – the Jewish world has our own commemoration, Yom haShoah, a week after Pesach, when we will hold ceremonies to remember the families we never had, the entire communities that were wiped out, the town and villages that were razed. As befits a date chosen to remember the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, it also honours the heroism of those who resisted and fought back, as well as the ever-decreasing numbers of those who escaped or survived.

To reaffirm the self-evident truth of the unique enormity of the evil that stalked Europe within the span of human memory is not to diminish or forget the other genocides in history, or to make little of the suffering of others, but Jewish people also recall its precedents. It's not for nothing that rabbinic tradition identifies both Haman of the Purim *Megillah* and the Nazis with the biblical Amalek, as all three sought to annihilate the Jewish people entirely. This was genocidal racism, pure and simple, not theological rivalry gone mad – a single grandparent could be a death warrant, and conversion saved no-one.

That's where Purim differs from Chanukah, where it was the Jewish religion not the Jewish people who were in peril. Where Pesach fits this typology is more complex – the Exodus story that we retell at the *seder* begins with the Jewish people being enslaved, not massacred, but Pharaoh orders the baby boys to be drowned, which is scarcely more benign! However, Moses repeatedly asks "Let my people go, so they can worship [Gd]", and the Exodus is literally the road to Sinai, so it is the religion as well as the people who are delivered from Egypt.

That is an important lesson for today, when in the forceful words of a recent book title, *People Love Dead Jews* – but "living Jews not so much". The lesson of Purim and Pesach is not merely remembrance, but celebration of a living tradition by a living community.

Chag sameach!

Matana

STARTING THE
NEXT CHAPTER



The Matana Club for primary school age children across Scotland has been busy! Following *Matana Live* in August – our first face-to-face events for nearly two years – the children created beautiful Rosh Hashanah pictures in their Matana calendars. These enable children to follow the Jewish year, and show the Hebrew months and chaggim (festivals). Each month the children create a new picture, making Matana Club a celebration of community.

In tandem with the recent COP26 climate conference, Matana held its own COP sessions including painting postcards on which the children could write their hopes, fears, desires, and priorities for our planet to share with local politicians.

As winter started to draw in, the dark was kept at bay by Matana's glow-

in-the-dark Havdalah and Chanukah celebration. Children cracked their glowsticks and sang havdalah together via Zoom, after which families throughout Scotland took turns to light their chanukah candles.

Come the spring (though we might not have known it from the weather!), Matana celebrated Tu b'Shvat with Sydney Switzer, UJIA Senior Educator, who wandered through Eastwood Park on Zoom, sharing the beauty of the new spring growth.

Now that the pandemic seems to be receding, Matana is bringing people together in communities across Scotland. As well as receiving monthly activity packs by post, children will now have the opportunity to meet up in Glasgow, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, where student volunteers and Matana leaders will run activities on a wide range of topics, while online sessions will continue for those unable to meet in person for whatever reason.

And in addition, Matana Club and SCoJeC are working towards a Scotland-wide gathering on 29 May. This will be held in the Central Belt, and everyone will be welcome to join us for an exciting day of fun and educational activities. More information will be available shortly, so put the date in your diary!

To join us, visit: bit.ly/matanascotland

Festival CALENDAR

PURIM

Fast of Esther: Wed 16 Mar

Purim: Thu 17 Mar

*(Megillah readings will be on
Wed night and Thurs morning)*

Shushan Purim: Fri 18 Mar

PESACH

Search for chametz:

Thu night 14 Apr

Fast of First-born, and
Burning the chametz: Fri 15 Apr

First Seder: Fri night 15 Apr

Second Seder: Sat 16 Apr night
after Shabbat

*Chol HaMoed (middle days)
continue until ...*

Yom Tov: Evening Fri 22 Apr
till after Shabbat 23 Apr

Yom HaShoah: Thu 28 Apr

Yom haAtzma'ut: Thu 5 May

LaG b'omer: Thu 19 May

SHAVUOT:

Yom Tov: Dusk Shabbat 4 Jun
till night Mon 6 Jun

Be Counted!

The next Scottish census will take place on 20th March 2022, having been postponed during the pandemic, and it's important for the Jewish Community to make our mark (literally!).

The Scottish census differs significantly from the English, which did go ahead last year. In Scotland, the religion question asks "What faith ... do you *belong* to?", whereas in England it asked "What faith *are* you?". SCoJeC has always argued that that wording may significantly reduce numbers as in large parts of the country there are no Jewish organisations to belong to. However, this time SCoJeC persuaded National Records of Scotland (NRS) also to include a prompt to write in "Jewish" under "Other" in the Ethnicity question, so people who feel they don't 'belong' in religious terms will still be able to record their cultural, ethnic, or genealogical background or affiliation. That can make a big difference – two censuses ago, in 2001 when there were two religion questions – current "belonging" and upbringing – 1,785 people said they were Jewish by upbringing, but did not tick a box to say that they currently "belong". In 2011, 812 people wrote in "Jewish" in response to the Ethnicity question despite there being no prompt to do so.

This doesn't just matter to statisticians and pedants. It matters because however people do – or do not – express their Jewishness, circumstances may lead them to need or want specifically Jewish welfare or other services. In fact research just published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) notes that even people who responded "None of the above" to a list of ways of identifying as Jewish, were in fact identifying simply by responding to the survey! Public services need to be aware that there isn't just one way to be Jewish.

Obviously, the census can only count responses on forms, so we all need to provide these responses. Your responses help ensure that communal organisations, local authorities, and public services are able to provide culturally appropriate services for everyone who would like to use them. So we urge everyone who regards themselves as Jewish in any way, whether by background or descent, by religious observance, or culturally, socially, or in any other way, to select the Jewish option under both Religion and Ethnicity. Please be counted, to help shape our Jewish future in Scotland.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THIS CENSUS CAN BE COMPLETED ONLINE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS ALSO A PAPER VERSION.
TOP: THE PAPER VERSION OF THE RELIGION QUESTION. CENTRE: THE FIRST SCREEN OF THE ETHNICITY QUESTION – CLICKING "OTHER" WILL BRING UP THE BOTTOM SCREEN WHERE YOU CAN WRITE IN 'JEWISH'.



Antisemitism in 2021

The Community Security Trust (CST), the organisation that works in partnership with the police and government to monitor antisemitism in the UK, has just published its *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2021*.

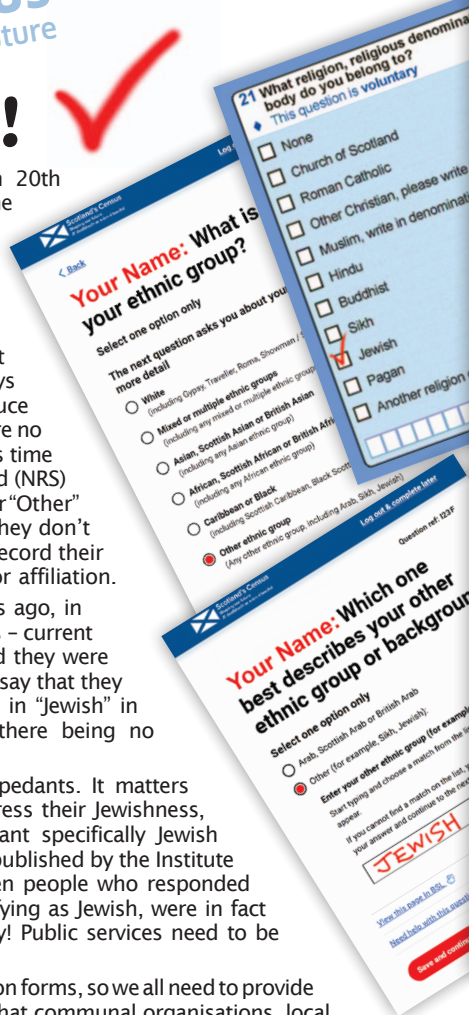
This reveals the highest annual total that CST has ever recorded – 2,255 incidents across the UK – a 34% increase on 2020 figures. 31 of these incidents were in Scotland, compared with 30 in 2020 and 28 in 2019. Those numbers make Scotland look good, but are more than double the 12 and 15 incidents in 2015 and 2016.

As unfortunately to be expected, the number of incidents spiked during the Gaza conflict in May and June, and CST commented that trigger events such as this consistently affect the levels of anti-Jewish hate directed at the Jewish community in the UK.

Worryingly, CST recorded 176 violent antisemitic incidents in 2021, the most ever recorded, and an increase of 76% on 2020. Three of these were serious enough to be classified as 'Extreme Violence', meaning they involved potential grievous bodily harm or a threat to life, while the other 173 were in the category of Assault. There were 82 incidents of Damage and Desecration of Jewish property, 1,844 incidents of Abusive Behaviour, including verbal abuse, antisemitic graffiti, abuse via social media and one-off hate mail, 143 direct antisemitic threats; and 10 cases of mass-mailed antisemitic leaflets or emails. The figure for Abusive Behaviour alone eclipses the total for all categories for every year prior to 2021.

For the second year in a row, online incidents fell, by 13%, but this understates the scale of online antisemitism, as CST only record incidents if they have been reported by either the victim or a witness; if the content shows evidence of antisemitic language or targeting; and if either the offender or victim is based in the UK. Targeted campaigns often involve dozens of accounts sending hundreds or even thousands of tweets, images, or posts, but each campaign of this type will only be recorded by CST as a single incident.

Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government commented: "These figures are a reminder to redouble our efforts to tackle the scourge of antisemitic hate. This year, the Scottish Government will work with key delivery partners to publish a new hate crime strategy, to guide how we tackle hatred, prejudice – including antisemitism – in Scotland, and to help ensure those that fall victim to or witness such heinous behaviours have the confidence to report them. We must do everything we can to combat the hateful attitudes and ignorance which lead to these appalling incidents."



SCoJeC



JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE,
222 FENWICK ROAD, GLASGOW G46 6UE

scojec@scojec.org 0141 – 638 6411

POLICY & RESEARCH LEAH
leah@scojec.org 0141 – 638 6411

PROJECTS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT KIRSTY
kirsty@scojec.org 07779 – 206 522

EDUCATION
education@scojec.org 0141 – 638 6411

JEWISH SCOTLAND CONNECTED MIKE
mike@scojec.org 07871 – 804 081

Contacts in the Corners

GLASGOW EVY
office@glasgowjewishrepcouncil.org 0141 – 577 8200

EDINBURGH
edinburgh@scojec.org 0141 – 638 6411

TAYSIDE & FIFE PAUL
taysideandfife@scojec.org 07906 – 219 262

ABERDEEN
aberdeensynagogue@gmail.com 07955 – 706 333

HIGHLANDS, ISLANDS, BORDERS AND ELSEWHERE
communities@scojec.org 0141 – 638 6411

SCOTTISH ISRAELI CULTURAL ASSOCIATION (SICA)
info@scotil.org

STUDENTS AHARON
scotchaplain@mychaplancy.co.uk 07791 – 292 790
HODAYA
07817 – 250 732

◆ Forthcoming Events:

◆ First Minister's Questions

The First Minister in conversation with the Scottish Jewish community – hybrid event in Giffnock, Edinburgh, and online.
Sun 27 March 6pm
www.scojec.org/fmq.html

◆ Matana Club Spring Gathering, Falkirk area Sunday 29th May

SEE MORE DETAILS AT:
www.scojec.org/whats-on.html

◆ News:

SIGN UP FOR RSS NEWS FEEDS:
www.scojec.org/rss/rss.xml

SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS, NEWSLETTERS, ETC:
www.scojec.org/mailling-lists.html

◆ Coronavirus Pandemic Info:


COMMUNAL SUPPORT, WELFARE SERVICES, & ACTIVITIES:
www.scojec.org/lockdown.html

◆ SCoJeC is grateful to:

- ◆ Eloise Bishop (Tu b'Shvat photographs, p2)
- ◆ Bawden Photography (portrait Fiona Frank p3)
- ◆ *People Love Dead Jews* by Dara Horn, published by W.W. Norton & Company (Remembrance, p3)

◆ Help SCoJeC help your community:

◆ DONATE AT: www.scojec.org/donate.html

◆ Amazon will donate 5p for every £10 you spend! 

REGISTER AT:
<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC029438>

The views expressed in Four Corners are those of the author, not necessarily of the Council.

All text and illustrations are copyright and may only be reproduced with permission and acknowledgement.

© SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES (SCOJEC)
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438