

# West Dunbartonshire Whisky

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

The fools of West Dunbartonshire Council asked for it when they decided to ban any books from their libraries that give a pro-Israel point of view or were printed in Israel. I thought George Galloway was a Dunbartonshire mutation. Now it seems there must be some more general infection in the air that turns some of its homo sapiens back into apes.

But it takes one act of stupidity to cause another one. Around the Jewish world, that new spiritual movement that has caught on like wildfire, the Shabbat morning kiddush club, has been galvanized into a response. From Los Angeles to St Johns Wood has come the call for a worldwide ban on West Dunbartonshire Whisky, which includes Chivas Regal, Glenlivet, and Auchentoshan (approved by the London Beth Din, which in itself must make it suspect). Frankly, none of them are worth shedding a tear over or getting drunk on. So long as they leave Caol Ila alone, I don't give a damn. Caol Ila comes from the Isle of Islay, where the bracing Atlantic winds clear the brains far more effectively than the fetid Lowland air of West Dunbartonshire.

This is just another example of second-rate failed politicians who end up as councilors because they are fit for no other real job in life, making fools of themselves. Or perhaps it was a case of Georgie Porgie Galloway arranging a subsidy from the estate of his old pal, Saddam Hussein. Not unlike the London School of Economics which one expects to take a stand that their great benefactor Gaddafi would approve of. Money makes the world go round, and down. And of course one expects that West Dunbartonshire will now throw out their computers too, given that Israel originated technology that lies insidiously deep within each one of them. (Read [Archbishop Cranmer's blog](#) for a more thorough response!)

But really, is a boycott the answer? Don't we argue in our role as victims that boycotts are ineffective scattergun tools that often hit the wrong people? The Americans tried re-naming the french fries when France wanted to block the Gulf War and for a while sales of Champagne and Camembert took a hit. Where did that get anyone? If an army marches on its stomach, religion seems to need wine and spirits.

Writing letters of protest is another matter, so is contacting the multinational that owns the whiskies and getting them to stop their donations and subsidies, which incidentally they give in abundance to West Dunbartonshire. That is worth doing anyway, and all the more since Arabs are not supposed to be drinking the stuff anyway.

If San Francisco weirdos decide to outlaw circumcision, does this mean we will refuse to speak to anyone from San Francisco, watch movies from Hollywood, or not fly on Boeings because they make jets in California? If Chivas (which was once owned by Bronfmans) had been guilty of this idiocy,

that would be different. But they have had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Yet I am rather pleased at this visceral response, even if it is silly itself. Perhaps it takes a shot of whisky to get apathetic, smug Jews off their well upholstered backsides and be proactive. In general, we seem to be stuck like bunny rabbits in car headlights and unable to respond to the growing threats to our societies; we leave it to a few mavericks in each community to take up the cudgels. If it requires some good scotch to stir up our guts and encourage us to protest, then that must surely be a positive byproduct of kiddush clubs.

I always liked kiddush clubs precisely because they challenged the boring, stuffy established order. I also liked them because instead of listening to some boring old fart droning on during the haftarah we could actually go out and engage in social lubrication, enjoy Shabbat, talk Torah even, instead of sitting chatting in shul, disturbing everyone else around.

Not only that, but it did seem to me that many who came back in afterwards prayed with so much more enthusiasm and concentration (when they weren't throwing their arms around and knocking their neighbors). The beauty of the synagogue, as opposed to the church, always was its informality and the sense that we were at home with the Almighty rather than stiff guests. Too many cathedral synagogues have lost that and the kiddush club was and is a great antidote.

But now I see they have other benefits—stirring the gut, getting the highland spirit, that of Robert Bruce, William Wallace, or Bonnie Prince Charlie, the acmes of lost causes, up and running. The bagpipes swirling, the kilts a-flying, and wae hae, off we go to battle!

Now trust me, Caol Ila will do that far better and more effectively than Auchentoshen! Besides, I bet the West Dunbartonshire councilors drink Irish whiskey, if they're not boring teetotalers.