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Volume 26  
Issue 3

Reform  
Judaism  
The Movement for Reform Judaism

September 2008  
Elul 5768

# *Etz Chaim*

## *L'Shanah Tovah*



## *Happy New Year*

Rabbi Emeritus:	Rabbi Sonny Herman
Community Rabbi:	Rabbi Cliff Cohen
Chairman:	Godfrey Fischer
Vice Chairman/Treasurer:	Ian Smiler
Honorary Secretary:	Eleanor Miller
Council Members: Brian Abraham, Hélène Cohen, Esther Solomon, David Fox, Simon Wolfe, Janine Chilly	

Thanet & District Reform Synagogue, 293A Margate Rd, Ramsgate, CT12 6TE  
TEL: 01843 851164 - A constituent member of the Movement for Reform Judaism

**Shabbat services and Festivals Calendar  
Monday 29th September – Sunday 28th December 2008**

**Elul 29 – Shevat 1, 5769**

*Kabbalat Shabbat services are held every Friday at 7.30pm (except the Shabbat Suppers – 6.45pm.)*

*Saturday services are on the first and third Saturday of each month at 10.30am.*

*Torah breakfasts start at 9.15am, followed by a shorter service at 10.30am.  
(NB Festival times vary – see below)*

*As the calendar is prepared in advance, details shown may be subject to amendment. Call 01843 851164 to check.*

**SEPTEMBER**

Mon 29 Sep, Elul 29, 7pm  
**Erev Rosh Hashanah**

Mon 20 Oct, Tishri 21, 7pm  
**Erev Shemini Atzeret/  
Simchat Torah**

**2008/5769**

Tue 30 Sep, Tishri 1, 10am  
**Rosh Hashanah**

Tue 21 Oct, Tishri 22, 10am  
**Shemini Atzeret/  
Simchat Torah**

**OCTOBER**

Sat 4 Oct, Tishri 5, 10.30am  
Shabbat Shuvah  
Vayelech

**NOVEMBER**

Sat 1 Nov, Cheshvan 3, 10.30am  
Noach

Wed 8 Oct, Tishri 9, 7pm  
**Kol Nidre**

Sat 15 Nov, Cheshvan 17, 10.30am  
Vayera, including the Baby Blessing  
of Isaac Miller

Thu 9 Oct, Tishri 10, 10am  
**Yom Kippur**

**DECEMBER**

Sat 6 Dec, Kislev 9  
**Torah breakfast 9.15am**  
Shabbat service 10.30am

Mon 13 Oct, Tishri 14, 7pm  
**Erev Sukkot**

Sat 20 Dec, Kislev 23 10.30am  
Blessing for Tevet  
Vayeshev

Tue 14 Oct, Tishri 15, 10am  
**Sukkot**

Sun 21 Dec, Kislev 24  
**Chanukah 1st candle**

Sat 18 Oct, Tishri 19, 10.30am  
**Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot**

Sun 28 Dec, Tevet 1, 3pm  
**Chanukah Party  
8th candle**

**Kol Nidre Appeal**

As in previous years, we are supporting one Jewish and one local charity. We have had a long association with WJR and hope that you will continue to support them through our appeal. Our links with the Pilgrims Hospice in Margate has also been an important one over the years and they have been of considerable help to a number of our members and their families. Donation forms will be sent to you with your High Holydays & Festivals ticket or the Newsletter. If you would like extra copies, please leave a message on the synagogue number or send for one by email.

**World Jewish Relief**

Founded in 1933, WJR is the main overseas aid arm of the UK Jewish community. It provides basic welfare support in the form of food, medication and fuel as well as sustaining and renewing Jewish life in communities across the world. With its global outlook today WJR is positioned as the charity to channel the UK Jewish community's response to disasters and need affecting the international community regardless of race, religion or nationality. This year's High Holy Days appeal will focus on two key Ukrainian projects - social assistance for the elderly (nationwide) and caring for children with special needs in Kharkov

**Pilgrims Hospices**

Pilgrims Hospices is an independent registered charity (293968) and the principal provider of specialist

palliative care in East Kent. They care for patients with a range of life limiting illnesses including cancer, heart failure, respiratory conditions and neurological diseases. Care is provided from their three sites in Canterbury, Ashford and Thanet.

Pilgrims Hospices provide a range of support services for patients, their families and carers, and their attractive grounds and facilities provide a welcome retreat for both patients and visitors.



Mazel Tov on the birth of Nell Lily on 20th July to David and Niki Wythe. A 3rd daughter to them and a sister to Freya and Daisy. A 5th grandchild for Audrey.

Mazel Tov also to Janine Chilly, whose son Simon and partner Katerina had a baby boy, Sebastian on 17th September.

*A very personal New Year Message from Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield, Head of the Movement for Reform Judaism*

### **Not JUST 'any dream will do'**

Linda Bayfield defined herself, first and foremost, as a wife and mother. But she was also a Jewish educator of great talent. She was Head Teacher of Akiva School at the Sternberg Centre in Finchley, the first Progressive Jewish primary school in Britain. It was a private school with 160 pupils.

Linda's educational style was characterised by love and care for each individual pupil. It contributed much to Akiva's popularity.

She had a dream. She wanted Akiva to be available to all, regardless of their income. She wanted Akiva to offer a lot more places. Thanks to many people but particularly her Chair of Governors Philip Simmons and her successor Sue de Botton, the new Akiva opened its doors in January, a matter of metres from its old premises. It is now a state school, in a state-of-the-art building, with 420 places.

This September our elder daughter Lucy's first child Francesca, who spent much of her first 2½ years with grandma Linda, will be in the junior school. Her brother Oliver will be in the reception class. Linda's son, Daniel, hopes that Zachary, born last November, will manage to get a place when he is old enough. Getting a place will be a challenge, as Linda's younger daughter Rabbi Miriam Berger knows well, since Finchley Reform Synagogue has experienced a huge increase in membership over the last two years, many hoping that their children can go to Akiva. Despite the two and a half fold increase in places, the Akiva waiting list is longer than ever.

If I stand at my office window I can see the new Akiva and catch a glimpse of Francesca running into grandma Linda's school. Life is a perplexing and challenging business, full of dreams and loss, joy and pain. Most of us carry both at the same time.

But thinking about Linda, our three children and our grandchildren – with Linda's dream now, five years on, fulfilled – my sense that there is more to life than the secularists would have us believe; that there is meaning and purpose in there somewhere, is stronger than ever.

May the New Year be a good one in which our best and worthiest dreams come to fruition.

L'shanah tovah.

### **Shalom and Welcome to Etz Chaim**

Happy New Year to all of our readers - may you all be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

This issue of Etz Chaim follows fairly sharply after the rather late previous edition, and the Synagogue Council has agreed to a slightly different timeframe for upcoming issues, so that we can advertise the upcoming festivals in good time, whilst at the same time, reviewing the previous festivals before we've all forgotten them! There will still be four editions a year, and they will be:

Chanukah - between mid-November and the start of December, looking back at the High Holy Days and forward to Chanukah.

Purim - will be at the start of February, looking back at the Chanukah party and forward to Purim and Pesach.

Summer - will be a May edition, looking back at Pesach and Purim, and forward to Shavuot, with advance notice of the High Holy Days.

High Holy Days - will be an August edition, looking forward to the Days of Awe and reviewing the summer.

We hope this change will make the newsletter more relevant and helpful to every subscriber.

L'Shanah Tovah,

Eleanor and Graham Miller



The Editors reserve the right to edit any material accepted for publication.

The deadline for the next issue is 14th November 2008.

All correspondence or articles to:

Etz Chaim News, 11 Watchester Lane, Minster, Ramsgate CT12 4DA or email [eleanor@buyjewishstuff.biz](mailto:eleanor@buyjewishstuff.biz).

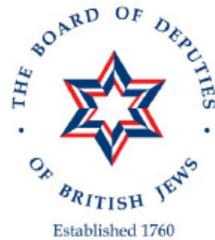
Tel: 01843 822550.

The articles, letters, advertising and content in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Thanet and District Reform Synagogue or of the Movement for Reform Judaism.

*Many thanks to Helene Cohen for providing the picture on the front of this edition, her own original artwork.*



# And now, a word from our Sponsors:



## A Message from the President, Henry Grunwald QC

This past year has seen both significant challenges both locally and around the world. Antisemitic discourse in the media, calls for boycotts against Israel and threats to our security all mean that the Board needs to remain as vigilant as ever.

Yet, as we turn the page on 5768 and look to the future, we take pride that the Board has responded to these issues robustly, leading the community's anti-BNP electoral drive, playing a key role in the memorable Salute to Israel parade, heading a 'Diamond Delegation' to Israel for its 60th anniversary, pioneering the 'Shared Futures' schools linking programme and launching a new 'Jewish Way of Life' CD-ROM.

All this is on top of our daily work in the key areas of education, communal affairs, civil society, as well as the international arena. With your essential support we will continue to represent our interests to the highest levels of government and act as the first port of call for those seeking to engage with British Jewry.

In this spirit I would like to thank all those who do so much both for their respective communities and for clal yisrael - our people as a whole. Without such generosity of time and effort - the tradition of service to the community - British Jewry would not be able to flourish as it does.

On behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, I wish you a Shanah Tova Umetukah – a Happy and Sweet New Year. May the coming year bring peace to us all.

there because of another simcha - our niece's wedding in London. The day was a success and I wish to thank all those who gave of their time and expertise before and during the day. One visitor told me that it was excellent last year and that this year's presentation was every bit as good. Praise indeed from a person whose opinion I value. I should mention that the musical performances were all given on a voluntary basis, as was everyone else's.

Hazel and I wish you all a happy, peaceful and healthy New Year.

L'shana Tova

Godfrey Fischer



## Rules for Jewish Living.

Never take a front-row seat at a bris  
If you can't say something nice, say it in Yiddish

The High Holidays have nothing to do with marijuana

And what's wrong with dry turkey?

A good kugel sinks in mercury

Guilt is critical to your existence

One mitzvah can change the world; two will just make you tired

Never leave a restaurant empty-handed

A bad matzo ball makes a good paperweight

Without Jewish mothers, who would need therapy?

According to Jewish dietary law, pork and shellfish may be eaten only in Chinese restaurants, on Sundays

If you are going to whisper at the movies, make sure it's loud enough for everyone else to hear

No meal is complete without leftovers

If you have to ask the price, you can't afford it But if you can, make sure you tell everybody what you paid

Non Jews leave and never say good-bye Jews say good-bye and never leave

Israel is the land of milk and honey; Florida is the land of milk of magnesia

If you don't eat it, it will kill me

Anything worth saying is worth repeating a thousand times

Next year in Jerusalem The year after, how about a nice cruise?

Spring ahead, fall back, winter in Florida

Laugh now, but one day you'll be driving a big Cadillac and eating dinner at four in the afternoon

There comes a time in every man's life when he must stand up and tell his mother that he is an adult

This usually happens around age 45.

## A word or two

Have you ever had that feeling that you would just like, once in a while, to be self-centred? Not self-ish, just focus on the 'me' instead of keeping in mind that there are others to consider? It's an emotion that usually tries to creep into the conscientiousness of those who do put themselves out for others. I don't think you should feel guilty about it. After all, we're only human.

Consider the opposite situation that there was nobody to think about. No family, no friends. What a terrible state to be in. And, as we know, there are very lonely souls out there. Fortunately, it generally comes as second nature to be thoughtful for others. Even if, sometimes, it can be inconvenient?

Of course, if you think about it, it works both ways. Without realising it, you may find others have been considerate to you. Even a smile at the right time can be the medicine needed. I have to admit to not taking the time to research the scriptures to prove the point that Judaism is a religion in which being together and helping others is part of our way of life. (To be honest, I was way behind my deadline target for the newsletter - something to do with unblocking

drains, but that's another story!). Actually, I have one word which will do. Tzadekah. We often translate it as 'charity'. But it means much more than that. It incorporates caring and 'right action'. Its root is tzadek, which means 'justice'.

Well, being Jewish might just allow you to be self-centred without the guilt. Actually, the guilt comes in somewhere else. I imagine you have already realised the route I'm taking. The end of September is Rosh Hashanah. Eight days later is Yom Kippur. What an opportunity to become introspective. Time to think about the 'me' and the year that has just past. None of us are perfect. We can always do better. And we can use the time during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services to look into our souls and resolve to face the future in a better frame of mind. And for those of you who tend to be one of the band of cultural Jews, why not come along during the year and see what we have to offer - you may just find you like it.

That word 'culture' gives me the perfect link to Sunday 7th September when we held open house again for the European Day of Jewish Culture and Heritage. Although Hazel and I were involved with the planning, we could not be



## MAJOR DRIVE TO INCREASE JEWISH CROSS-COMMUNAL COLLABORATION

Three of the largest synagogue movements within Judaism – representing around a third of British Jewry - have agreed a “Statement of Community Collaboration”, committing them to drive forward cross-communal working and respect each others’ traditions.

The statement is seen as a major shift in the way in which the various synagogue movements representing the UK’s quarter of a million-strong Jewish community behave towards each other. The signatories are inviting the broader community to follow their example and commit to the same values.

The statement says: **“Diversity is a reality within the British Jewish community but true pluralism (treating with respect other groups and their philosophies) is not, yet. We believe that British Jewry both needs and deserves better.”**

Signed by the Chairs, Chief Executives and senior Rabbis of the Liberal, Masorti and Reform

movements the statement says that the Jewish community cannot afford to divide against itself and calls for a new voice, which is open, tolerant, collaborative and respectful.

Its signatories say that the statement is, in part, prompted by growing Jewish fundamentalism which, they say, is exclusive and judgmental. They quote as one example of this trend the exclusion of pupils from JFS (a UK’s largest Jewish school) because of a refusal to recognise Israeli and other Jewish conversions as legitimate.

In contrast, the statement describes the cross-communal educational programme, Limmud – attended by Jews from all sections of the community - as the “most inspiring example of pluralism” and also mentions the UJIA and Jewish Care as “respectful and creative cross-communal partnerships”.

It calls on the whole community to show respect for one another’s leaders by honouring them, where appropriate, with titles such as “Rabbi” and “teacher”, a practice which is currently not universal. It pledges the three movements to respect “the dignity of each individual at sensitive times in the

life cycle, including marriage, the celebration of namings, Brit and Bnei Mitzvah, as well as during illness and after death,” all of which have led to distress and confrontations in recent times.

The document identifies three specific areas for increased collaboration in the short term, being: the further development of Jewish schools, such as JCoSS, the UK’s first cross-communal Jewish school; support for students and young people to “avoid wasteful duplication and create a well-resourced programme”; and Jewish ethics, where the three movements have backed the setting up of ResponsAbility, a cross-communal ethics think tank.

Commenting, Chair of the Movement for Reform Judaism, Stephen Moss, said:

“With a falling Jewish population, Judaism in this country needs to be inclusive and collaborative to survive into the 21st Century. We believe that this type of pluralist approach serves the best interests of the whole community and we have a responsibility to provide the leadership to promote it.”

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Senior Rabbi of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, added:

“This pluralist approach is one with which I believe many people across the community will be able to identify. It is in no way intended to be exclusive to the three signatories and I, for one, am hopeful that others will choose to share our vision for the community and endorse it.”

Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, said:

“Liberal Judaism sees this as an on-going process and believes that we can do much more together. Of course our three movements have substantive differences of belief and practices and in no way do we seek to diminish them - but as a people our responsibility is to accentuate what we share in common and find areas in which we can work together, rather than to focus on what divides us to keep us apart.”

The three signatories together represent over a third of Britain’s Jews, with Liberal Jewish synagogues accounting for around 8%, the Masorti movement 6% and the Movement for Reform Judaism 20%. The three movements span from the progressive to the traditional, both in their practices and their attitudes to Jewish law. For further information please visit [www.liberaljudaism.org](http://www.liberaljudaism.org), [www.masorti.org.uk](http://www.masorti.org.uk), or [www.reformjudaism.org.uk](http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk).

## **Advertising in Etz Chaim**

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If you would like to submit an advert for inclusion in Etz Chaim, please contact David Fox by email: [davidfox@vfast.co.uk](mailto:davidfox@vfast.co.uk) or by post.

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We are always open to suggestions – whatever it is, if you want it, we'll do our very best to find it for you.

At the moment, we have limited stock listed on our eBay shop and our shop on eBid ([uk.ebid.net](http://uk.ebid.net), search for BuyJewishStuff) but the best way to view our wares is in Shul on the Judaica table.

This is because BuyJewishStuff will be relaunching our online shop after the High Holy Days. A New Shop for a New Year! Please email [eleanor@buyjewishstuff.biz](mailto:eleanor@buyjewishstuff.biz), or phone 01843 822550 for any Judaica requirements or further details.

### **A Day In The Life!**

*Here is the first of what we hope will become a regular feature, showing the day to day realities of life for those who hold a position of significance within our community. This time, we gain an insight into the life of our very own Rabbi Cliff:*

If you have ever wondered what a Rabbi does in between services, you will not be the first. It is a question all Rabbis are asked, and not infrequently, but at TDRS it is perhaps more pertinent. After all, I usually conduct only one service each month, and in fact this is currently on hold while I look after a small community in North London during the maternity leave of their Rabbi. TDRS has looked after itself for twenty years on this basis. As far as services are concerned, all I have really done is take over the monthly input that Sonny Herman used to provide.

When I first came to Thanet, Godfrey said to me, "We don't need a Rabbi for services, we need a Rabbi for everything else." I greeted this with enthusiasm and relief. At last, a communal leader with the right priorities! I agreed with the TDRS Council that what I can provide is a raising of our profile – among Jews in Thanet,

among the wider Jewish community and among the non-Jewish community – and thus make us both more attractive to potential members and more involved in local affairs.

In a typical day between services, I converse with perhaps ten or fifteen people, by email, by telephone or face to face. Some of this will be about the lives and needs of our members and associates. Some will be about my chaplaincy work in local hospitals or at Canterbury prison. Some will be about Jewish Kent or Holocaust Memorial Day or Kent SACRE or the Thanet Interfaith Council. Last week, in one day I attended a SACRE meeting in Maidstone, called in at William Harvey hospital in Ashford, came home to make several phone calls and deal with eight emails, then went to Margate Mosque for a meeting with the Imam. From there I called on a member of the TIC exec, then went home to prepare a talk to a local Church about the Jewish origins of Christianity.

I am only your part-time Rabbi, and that day last week used nearly two weeks worth of the time you pay for. Of course, I am also a member of the community, and so I give my voluntary time to it, as do many of you. That is why neither I nor your Council

measure my time on your behalf against the contract. But as with all of us, there are periods when my voluntary time is in short supply, and then our TDRS Golden Rule applies – the one question we never ask one another is “Where were you?”

Today was a full working day at the prison, but since coming home I have sent several emails, taken three phone calls and made two, and late at night I am writing this, which I shall send by email to Eleanor before going to bed. There are other tasks still waiting to be done, but they will not be done today. Tomorrow is Friday, so after another day at the prison I shall not get round to them. I shall not even think about them on Shabbat, so it will be Sunday before I return to my list.

Some people will be disappointed at how long it takes me to get round to them, most will simply be glad I did. If one of them is you, please be in the second group. Please remember that I also have a wife and four children, and a wider circle of family and friends who all have legitimate demands on my time. And occasionally I also like to sit in a chair and read a book!

Cliff Cohen

### **Coffee Mornings and Shabbat Suppers 2009**

We are now planning next year's programme. Would you like to hold a coffee morning at your house, or even arrange one (or afternoon tea) in the synagogue, perhaps with a theme?

Could you donate raffle prizes?

Or would you like to cater one of the Shabbat Suppers? Experience shows that if the meal is kept simple, the task is not onerous.

These events are a major part of our fundraising programme and every little penny earned helps keep the synagogue fees down.

For Coffee Mornings please let Esther Solomon know. And for the Shabbat Supper, Godfrey Fischer is your contact.



### **Vacancy**

Volunteer Wardens to assist with the organisation and smooth running of our services.

For further information please call Godfrey Fischer on 01843 851164

### **A Prayer for a Happy New Year.**

*(found on www.harryc.com)*

May you be blessed with good neighbors who are there for you when you need them, and who are not around too much when you don't need them.

May the clothing styles of yesterday come back so I can wear all that stuff that I don't have the heart to throw away. And may empire waistlines, and muumuus, and granny skirts come back for women. After all, why should those foreigners -- Armani, Gucci, Versace and Borsini dictate what we wear? Instead may those great American Jewish designers... Poly and Ester, reign supreme.

May the expressions “you know”, and “like”, and “whatever” be retired. And may those old fashioned expressions: “thank you”, “pardon me”, “after you”, and “you look lovely”, come back into use instead.

May we sing songs that are singable, that have lyrics that are understandable, and may we not have to wear ear plugs when our children play music in their rooms. In this new year that now begins, may your hair, your teeth, your facelift and your stocks not fall; and may your blood pressure, your cholesterol and your mortgage interest rate not rise.

May the world enjoy a year that is free of hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, drought, and political speeches, which produce the most wind of all.

May you have a spouse, or a child or a friend, or a grandchild, who loves you, even though they really know you. And may you learn that giving love away freely without strings is the surest way of receiving it in return.

May you win the lottery, and thereby acquire a host of long lost relatives, and may you remember Beth Tikvah when you win.

May your children or your grandchildren receive a good report in school. and may you receive a good report too, from your dentist, from your ophthalmologist, from your dermatologist, from your cardiologist, from your gastro enterologist, from your podiatrist, from your urologist, and ultimately, from your God.

May there be peace this year between the Jews of Israel and the Arabs, and may there also be peace between the Jews of Israel, which sometimes seems much more difficult to achieve.

L'Shana Tova!

campus security to make sure that all incidents are investigated fully, and that Jewish students can have pride in their identity.

### Streetwise

CST joined forces with Maccabi GB in 2005 to create Streetwise. We work together with Jewish schools and community organisations, enhancing the personal safety and personal development of young Jewish people to support their safe, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Streetwise embraces all Jewish youth regardless of their religious, political or social outlook and has been warmly praised by education authorities. Look out for courses in your area or phone us on 020 8457 2331 to book a course at your location. [www.streetwisegb.org](http://www.streetwisegb.org)

### Vote of Thanks

CST's work would simply not be possible without our personnel, the support of their families, and the partnership of our community. Throughout the year CST works alongside hundreds of communal organisations and their many volunteers. We sincerely thank them for their continued support and partnership in our work.

CST would also like to warmly thank our network of over three thousand trained volunteer personnel across the UK who give their precious time to protecting our

community in all circumstances. In particular, CST also thanks the partners and families of all our personnel, for supporting them in this important work.

**CST asks that the community co-operate with our personnel and that any incidents or security concerns are reported as soon as possible. In an emergency, call the Police immediately on 999 and contact your local CST office on 020 8457 9999.**



Dear Everybody

David & I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome which you gave us last Shabbat. We both felt that we'd known you all for a long while and the sincerity stood out a mile. I know that Betty was very proud of the Shul and its members. We hope to come and see you in the not to distant future.

David and Monty Ceen  
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex  
July 2008

(Monty & David are Betty Gee's twin brother and nephew, Ed)

### Ask The Rabbi

*Dr Jonathan Romain answers questions fortnightly on [www.reformjudaism.org.uk](http://www.reformjudaism.org.uk), and we reproduce some of the more interesting for you here:*

#### I know Reform Judaism allows cremation - but why?

The original method of disposing a dead body in Jewish tradition was that of burial. However, there was nothing distinctively Jewish about this, and it merely reflected a contemporary practice. Thus the patriarchs were buried above ground, as was the custom then, in the family tomb of Machpelah (Genesis 23. 1-20). This tradition later changed to burial below ground, whilst another, much later development, was that instead of the body just being wrapped in a shroud, it was put in a coffin so as to conform with civil law. Cremation has been the normal practice in certain parts of the world for several thousand years. It did occur in the land of Israel in biblical times, although only in special circumstances, as in the disposal of the remains of King Saul, and in times of plague (I Samuel 31. 12-13; Amos 6. 10).

Today in Britain, cremation accounts for 70% of all funerals, and is also often chosen by Jews. Some people prefer it because it means they need not worry about the future upkeep of their grave; or because it does not use up land; or because it is less expensive; or because they personally feel more comfortable with it. Orthodox Judaism opposes it for numer-

ous reasons: partly because it is not traditional and is seen as imitation of a gentile custom; partly because it is considered akin to mutilating a corpse, which is forbidden in Jewish Law; and partly because it involves the destruction of one's body and would therefore prevent the physical resurrection of the dead with the coming of the Messiah. Reform considers that all of these objections are insufficient arguments to deny cremation for those who so wish.

The fact that cremation in the West is a modern development is not necessarily grounds for automatic disqualification, otherwise many other aspects of life today would be forbidden to Jews, from the car to the aspirin. Instead, it has to be judged on its own merits. Mutilation does not occur in the sense of maliciously destroying a body; on the contrary, cremations are conducted with the utmost solemnity and reverence. The opposition of Jewish tradition to the burning of a body was based on the assumption that it was a disgrace. It did not envisage a situation where it was the specific wishes of the deceased. Few Jews today believe in the physical resurrection of the dead, with most subscribing instead to a belief in an afterlife for the soul. Even if one does accept resurrection literally, it would be only logical that in miraculous times new life could be given to ashes as much as to old bones, many of which would have crumbled to dust themselves. There is no reason, therefore, not to opt for cremation. At the same time, honouring the last wishes of the person

concerned is an important obligation in itself. Moreover, the actual service at a cremation is exactly the same as that at a funeral: all that differs is the location. Full mourning rites can occur too, be it reciting the kaddish or holding a shivah. Of course, there are many Jews who still prefer the idea of a burial - it is entirely a matter of personal preference.



### Ask The Rabbi - Part 2

**A friend and I are having an ongoing argument as to whether you can be a Jew but have doubts about God ? If I stick to the Jewish laws and commandments even though I am not sure what I believe in God, then am I still Jewish ?**

To my mind, the short answer is 'yes'. To go back a step : of course Judaism is founded on a belief in God – God is the third word in the Hebrew version of the Bible and is central to Judaism in two distinct roles – first, as the creative power that was responsible for the world; second as a moral force whose notion of ethics has been communicated to humanity through a series of laws (such as the Ten Commandments).

However, Judaism is rather curious in the way that it has been careful not to define God. The Bible tells us lots about humans and expectations about us, but very little about the nature of God. It is noticeable, for instance, that the 613 laws of

Judaism are about what we should and should not do – not about what we should and should not believe. This was partly because once you define God, you limit God. It was also because humans cannot really understand the whole being of God, just get partial glimpses. In addition, Judaism was happy to assume the existence of God, but not go into minute details. It was this gap that eventually led Moses Maimonides to try to define the beliefs of Judaism in his Thirteen Principles of Faith – although it was not until the 13th century that this happened! – and it was still fairly general (it was then written in song form – the Friday night Yigdal).

Still, many people find God a puzzling concept, because they question what sort of God would create a world that is both wonderful and imperfect, or because they have not felt any sense of God in their own lives, or because they do believe in a divine being but doubt what religion says about God. This applies in particular to many Jews, who are unsure about the nature of God but still reckon that Judaism (with its sense of community, morals, family structure, individual responsibility) is worthwhile and beneficial. It can mean that they feel services are irrelevant but still value being part of the synagogue. This is not being heretical or hypocritical - it's very Jewish! Ideally, a Jew takes God very seriously – but there are different ways of doing that, which is why I have always liked the saying "To be a good Jew , you don't have to believe in God – you just have to do what he says' .



Security issues are sadly a feature of modern life, but this should not prevent us from living our lives as we choose. This is why CST works throughout the year, ensuring that our community can openly enjoy its Jewish way of life with pride and safety. Rosh Hashanah is a high point in our Jewish calendar and CST looks forward to being with our community at this important time.

### Security Enhancement

CST's ongoing work takes place at hundreds of communal buildings throughout the UK, including schools, synagogues and community centres. Working in partnership with local communities and organisations, CST has installed a range of physical security measures across our communal buildings. These include the fitting of shatterproof film on windows. Further enhancements will follow during the coming year.

### Combating Antisemitism

All of society is threatened by the escalation in recent years of antisemitic incidents and rhetoric.

Antisemitism warns us all of deep problems and fears within society. CST is dedicated to building partnerships within, and beyond, the Jewish community to help reduce antisemitism, prejudice, division and extremism. CST is working with politicians and Police to educate about antisemitism and the dangers it poses. Crucially, the 2006 All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism resulted in the Government making an unprecedented commitment to work with CST and other communal groups to combat antisemitic hatred. Police co-operation with CST security teams is excellent and we look forward to further co-operation and partnership in the coming year.

### On Campus

Unfortunately this year has seen a continued increase in antisemitic rhetoric and incidents on university and further education campuses across the UK. This has happened in an atmosphere of increasing anti-Israel hatred that has left many Jewish students, and their parents, nervous about physical safety and the preservation of basic Jewish rights on campus. CST is committed to ensuring that Jewish students are free from political intimidation and that they are safe and secure as they go about their daily life on, and around, campus. We will continue working closely with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS), local Police, university authorities and

## European Day of Culture and Heritage

Once again this year, Thanet and District Reform Synagogue opened its doors for the European Day of Culture and Heritage. The many highlights of the day in this year's theme of Jewish Music included

- ✧ display boards of a historical timeline in the main room of the shul
- ✧ a PowerPoint display created by Benjy Cohen of common Jewish religious songs and hymns
- ✧ two members of Thanet Concert Clarinets playing Klezmer music
- ✧ our very own David Barnet playing music by Jewish songwriters
- ✧ our very own Jonathan Fischer with his A Capella ensemble
- ✧ and an essential part of heritage and culture, cakes and biscuits by two archetypal Jewish Mothers, Hazel Fischer and Helene Cohen

The day was a stupendous success, thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, and even raised £25 for the Synagogue funds from the sale of said cakes, biscuits and beverages. Many thanks to everyone who helped to make the day so successful and enjoyable.



*Rabbi Cliff Cohen shows Ramsgate's Lady Mayor Councillor Mrs Kay Dark and husband the Torah Scroll at the European Day of Culture and Heritage*

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*Rabbi Sonny Herman and Mrs Herman,  
Rabbi Cliff Cohen and Mrs Cohen and  
family, Chairman and Council, wish  
everyone a happy and healthy New Year,  
and greetings from the following mem-  
bers and friends:*

*Barbara and Ian Smiler and Betty Gee*

*Syb Stubbs*

*Joseph Erlick*

*Hazel, Godfrey & Jonathan Fischer and Rachel &  
Gordon Fox*

*Lorna and Bob Taylor*

*Audrey Wythe, children and grandchildren*

*Brian Abraham*

*Zena Pettle*

*Jon and Anne Leigh, Dan, Jen, Kira and Summer  
Hilton, Dan Viv, Josh and Luke Leigh*

*Sandra and Jonathan Newman*

*Miriam Bendon*

*Denis and Jeanne Coberman*

*Rebecca Senel, Hannah and Sarah*

*Jacqui Rose*

*Bill and Pat Price*

*Frances Gallacher and family*

*Erwin and Esther David*

*Esther Solomon*

*Muriel Gillis*

*Diana, Anthony, Marcus and Edward da Costa*

*Eleanor and Graham Miller, Toby, Reuben and  
Isaac*

*Tom and Rivka Dodds*

*Simon Wolfe and Family*

*L'Shana Tovah!*