

# ETZ CHAIM The movement for REFORM JUDAISM

The Newsletter for the Thanet & District Reform Synagogue

## Pesach Edition



(A Page from the Barcelona Haggadah Spain, 14th Century The British Library, London)

## Shabbat



Join us for Shabbat. The atmosphere is relaxed with familiar prayers using traditional and modern melodies. We use both Hebrew and English and the Hebrew is also transliterated. Kiddush and refreshments follow each service.

There couldn't be a better way to connect with your Jewish heritage - no strings attached! (However, phone the synagogue beforehand in case of a change of times.)

You can contact [warden@tdrs.org.uk](mailto:warden@tdrs.org.uk) or 01843 851164 for further information

## Services and Festivals Calendar

Our Shabbat services are held every Friday at 7.30pm and the first and third Saturday of the month at 10.30am and are not, therefore, listed below unless there is a variation such as occasional Mincha services, Torah Breakfasts, Shabbat Suppers, etc.

**Please note a time change for our Erev Yom HaShoah service which is now 3.30pm on Sunday 23 April, 27 Nisan. The service will now include a dedication ceremony for our newly commissioned Klatovy Memorial tree. This Civic Service is by invitation only so please ensure you have replied. See page 8 for details**

### 2017/5777

#### APRIL

Mon 10 Apr, 14 Nisan  
*Seder*

Tue 11 Apr, 15 Nisan, 10am  
*First day Pesach service*

Sun 23 Apr, 27 Nisan, 3.30pm  
*Erev Yom Hashoah service*  
Yom HaShoah and Memorial Tree Dedication Service

Sat 29, 3 Iyar 3.30pm Mincha service

#### MAY

Mon 1 May, 5 Iyar, 7pm  
*Yom Hazikaron/ Erev Yom Ha'atzma'ut*  
Remembrance Day and Israel Independence Day service and celebration

Tue 30 May, 5 Sivan, 7pm  
*Erev Shavuot service*

Wed 31 May, 6 Sivan, 10am  
*Shavuot service*

#### JUNE

Sat 3 Jun, 9 Sivan  
*Torah Breakfast, 9.15am Service, 11am*

Fri 23 Jun, 29 Sivan

*Shabbat Supper, 6pm for 6.15pm followed by a shorter service at 8pm*

## **JULY**

Sat 15 Jul, 21 Tammuz, 10.30am

*Outdoor service and picnic in the grounds of St Lawrence College, Ramsgate*

*(NB: There is no service in the synagogue today)*

Sat 29 Jul, 6 Av, 3.30pm Mincha service

## **AUGUST**

Tue 1 Aug, 9 Av, 7pm

*Tisha b'Av service*

## **SEPTEMBER 5778**

Wed 20 Sep, 29 Elul, 7pm

*Erev Rosh Hashanah service*

Thu 21 Sep, 1 Tishri 5777, 10am

*Rosh Hashanah service*

Fri 29 Sep, 9 Tishri, 7pm

*Kol Nidre service (Fast commences 6.17pm)*

Sat 30 Sep, 10 Tishri, 10am

*Yom Kippur service (Fast ends 7.24pm)*

## **OCTOBER**

Wed 4 Oct, 14 Tishri, 7pm

*Erev Sukkot service*

Thu 5 Oct, 15 Tishri, 10am

*Sukkot service*

Wed 11 Oct, 21 Tishri, 7pm

*Erev Simchat Torah/Shemini Atzeret*

*Torah service and celebration*

Thu 12 Oct, 22 Tishri, 10am

*Simchat Torah/Shemini Atzeret service*

## **TDRS Chesed**

Need a chat?

Require some help?

Under the weather?

Our community cares.

Let us know at

**chesed@tdrs.org.uk**

## **Newsletter**

If you have anything you would like to put into the newsletter please contact Tim Spurrier at:

**Post** - c/o 293a Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6TE

**Telephone** - 01843 851164

**Email** - newsletter@tdrs.org.uk

The editor reserves the right to edit, refuse, or postpone any material submitted for publication. The articles, letters, advertising, and content do not necessarily reflect the views of the TDRS or the Movement for Reform Judaism.

## Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the new edition of Etz Chaim. A big thank you to the great contributions for this edition. Those who take the time and effort to contribute really do make the newsletter the interesting publication it is.

We have a good mix of articles and thoughts from cricket to Brexit and Jerry Springer to art. I'm sure you would agree that is quite a range of topics and reflects on the diverse community we are.

Of course we can never have too much input. So keep those contributions coming through. You don't have to wait until the next edition is due. Feel free to send things through whenever the fancy takes you. Also if there are any things you think we can include please drop me a line.

This Pesach edition has plenty of news and views from inside and outside of our community. I hope you enjoy it. Feedback always welcome!

Tim Spurrier

## A message from Rabbi Cliff Cohen

In these days of fast mass communication, the term 'fake news' has become commonplace. We hear it on the radio and TV, we read it in the papers and it features in casual conversation on a daily basis. This is because what used to be the province of hate-driven minorities and sensationalist journalists (remember "Freddie Starr ate my hamster"?) seems to have quickly become a standard communication technique for anyone from the lowest government official to the president of the United States.

We Jews should not be surprised at this. The idea that powerful or respected - no, they are not the same thing - world leaders should offer us fake news, or its sister, 'alternative facts', is not a new or even a recent experience for us, especially at Pesach time. Ever since Augustine in the fourth century proclaimed the fake news that "the Jews killed Jesus", Jews have been killed by those who believe the alternative facts. In 1099 Pope Urban called for a crusade and Peter the Hermit radicalised many Christians to the cause, leading to the mass murder of tens of thousands of innocent Jews in Europe. In 1144 the monk Thomas of Monmouth accused the Jews of Norwich of murdering a local boy, William, as a ritual slaughter traditional amongst Jews for preparation of matzah, and a sequence of blood libels followed - Harold of Gloucester in 1168, Robert of Bury in 1181 and Hugh of Lincoln in 1255, to name just the English examples. Blood libels have led to Jewish deaths ever since - there was one in New York as recently as 1928. In 1190 the Jews of Norwich were massacred, as were the Jews of York in the

same year, and all because of fake news.

What has been the Jewish response? In Lincoln it took 700 years for Hugh's death to be acknowledged as fake news. In 1955 the cathedral replaced the plaque relating the blood libel with another which recognises that "Such stories do not redound to the credit of Christendom". But in all that time Jews did not stop celebrating Pesach. In times of persecution we have opened the door during our seder. We have reaffirmed our commitment to end slavery and our trust in the goodness of God's world. We have sung jolly songs and drunk wine and rejoiced in our freedom.

So may it be for us this year. There is fake news and it does damage, but Judaism is an optimistic faith. We believe passionately that there is more goodness in God's world than evil, and the Pesach message is that ultimately it is the goodness that is destined to prevail. Let it be in some way a result of our own contribution.

A very happy Pesach to you all.

## MRJ Movement Updates

For the latest news and events from the Movement for Reform Judaism and Reform communities across the country, sign up for the MRJ Movement Update.

This newsletter email goes out fortnightly and we won't use your email address for anything other than this.

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## Born in a London Tube: Jerry Springer's Remarkable Story

by **Richard Verber**  
**Head of External Affairs**  
**World Jewish Relief**

In July 1939 Margot and Richard Springer arrived in England. They were among the last Jews to escape the clutches of the Nazis just weeks before Germany invaded Poland. Margot was 35, her husband Richard, 33 and, coincidentally, they shared the same birthday - September 11. The young couple were yet to have children.

They spent the war years in London. Baby Evelyn came along first. In 1943 Margot became pregnant again. Although the Blitz was over, they still had to make their way to air raid shelters regularly. In February 1944 she gave birth in the shelter in Highgate Tube station.

I can only imagine the fear caused by the air raid siren coupled with being nine months' pregnant, knowing you might have to give birth at any minute without the sanitation of a hospital.



But their little boy grew up to become Jerry Springer, TV host and politician.

Jerry's grandmothers were murdered in concentration camps - his maternal grandmother, Marie Kalmann, in Chelmno, Poland, and his paternal grandmother, Selma Springer, in Theresienstadt in what is now the Czech Republic.

In all Jerry lost 27 members of his family in the Holocaust. Like many refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, Jerry's parents arrived in the UK with very little and

needed urgent help. The Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) – the precursor to World Jewish Relief – was their lifeline. Jerry attributes his parents' survival to World Jewish Relief. "I am delighted to support the organisation which helped my parents in 1939," he told us.



Last year we presented Jerry with his parents' records from World Jewish Relief's newly-digitised archives. "I was deeply touched when I received the records of my parents' immigration. These papers are a piece of family history which I will treasure forever," he said.

Jerry's story is a remarkable one. His family moved to the United States when he was just five, believing America represented a place where people could live without persecution. Jerry became mayor of Cincinnati at the age of 33. A stint as a news presenter led to him becoming one of America's best-known talk show hosts. Yet he remains connected to his roots and his community.

World Jewish Relief was integral in bringing over tens of thousands of refugees like Jerry's parents from Nazi-occupied Europe, including 10,000 children who came on the Kindertransport and 732 orphan survivors known as "The Boys". World Jewish Relief is now offering people free access to their family records, so if you think that we may have helped you or a family member, please visit [www.worldjewishrelief.org/archives](http://www.worldjewishrelief.org/archives).

World Jewish Relief, in partnership with Mosaic Jewish Primary School (MJPS), is holding a South London Archives Roadshow event on Sunday, June 11, 2017 from 3.00pm-5.00pm at MJPS. Tickets are free and can be reserved via [www.worldjewishrelief.org/roadshow](http://www.worldjewishrelief.org/roadshow).

We'll go behind the scenes of the Kindertransport and look at the rescue of tens of thousands of children and adults during the 1930s and 40s. You'll have the chance to discuss your family records and search our database for your



family members. And of course, as it's a Jewish event, light refreshments will be served!

World Jewish Relief's work helping those in desperate need did not stop after the Holocaust. As the British Jewish community's humanitarian agency, we are helping thousands in crisis right now, particularly people caught up in the devastating conflict in Ukraine that has so deeply scarred the large Jewish community there. Find out more about our work at [www.worldjewishrelief.org](http://www.worldjewishrelief.org).

## Yom HaShoah and Memorial Tree Dedication Service

On Sunday 23 April 2014 there will be a special civic event at TDRS. Starting at 3.30pm, this year's service is particularly significant for a community as it will include a dedication ceremony for our recently commissioned memorial tree sculpture, which commemorates the important bond we share with the lost community of Klatovy.

The community of 278 people was wiped out as part of the Nazi programme of deportation to death camps in 1942. The Torah scrolls from this and surrounding communities were rescued in the 1960s and our community is proud to be the custodians of one of these scrolls.

The tree created by Glasgow based metalwork artist includes 278 leaves inscribed by members of our community with the names of the lost Klatovy Jews, thus providing a personal and persistent link between the communities.





## Join us for World Jewish Relief's South London Archives Roadshow

World Jewish Relief and Mosaic Jewish Primary School present a free event for the whole family. Go behind the scenes of the Kindertransport and search our database for your family members. Refreshments will be served.

**Sunday, 11 June 2017, 3pm-5pm**

Mosaic Jewish Primary School, 170 Roehampton Lane, SW15 4EU

Space is limited so please visit [worldjewishrelief.org/roadshow](http://worldjewishrelief.org/roadshow) to reserve your **FREE tickets**



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**E** [info@worldjewishrelief.org](mailto:info@worldjewishrelief.org)  
**W** [worldjewishrelief.org](http://worldjewishrelief.org)



## Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner on attack in Westminster

Reform Judaism condemns the attacks in Westminster. Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected. We join together in mourning those who have died, send prayers of healing and consolation to those injured and pay tribute to the emergency services for their vital and brave work.

An attack on parliament, the heart of our democracy, is an attack on the society and values we hold so dear.

Britain stands together today; I am heartened by the solidarity I have seen from all sectors of our national community.

May the One who brings peace in the highest, bring peace to us and to all Israel and to the whole world.

## Board of Deputies Update

*David Fox*



Over the last year, our community contributed £825 to the activities of the Board of Deputies via the annual voluntary levy of £25 per member (increased to £30 for 2017). You may have wondered what happens to this contribution. Here are just a sample of The Board of Deputies' impacts over the last few months - a comprehensive summary can be found on the Board of Deputies website [www.bod.org.uk](http://www.bod.org.uk)

1) The Jewish Manifesto - the result of a community wide consultation which involved the participation of over 300 organisations and individuals. For the first time ever, the community was able to articulate the diverse range of issues that affect the UK Jewish community in an imaginative way that captured the imagination and secured the support of politicians of all parties.

It was sent to every parliamentary candidate in the run up to the 2015 General Election and received wholehearted endorsement from the Prime Minister and the Leaders of the Labour Party and the Lib Dems.

It has provided the bedrock on which we have built relationships with MPs, Peers and Ministers

who were engaged the way it was condensed into the '10 Commitments' - I wonder if they were harder to keep than the Ten Commandments!

We also went on to produce manifestos for the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland elections last year - also a ground-breaking initiative.

- 2) The Employers Guide to Judaism, which was launched by the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Rt Hon Iain Duncan-Smith who praised it to the heavens as a positive example of how faith communities can encourage understanding amongst employers.
- 3) The Judaism GCSE Religious Studies Definitive Resource, an initiative by the Board of Deputies to ensure that the study of Judaism is well informed, accurately represented and enjoyable. This is a first- up to this point, there were no teaching materials of such quality and depth.
- 4) Defending our students- we demanded that University College London (UCL) launch a report into the intimidating protests that occurred against the Friends of Israel Society event, which they immediately did. We produced a campaign resource for students alongside UJS called 'Bridges Not Boycotts', which challenges the BDS narrative and provides students with arguments to counter it.

## Synagogue Council

### Chairman/Treasurer

Ian Smiler

### Vice Chairman

David Fox

### Honorary Secretary

Simon Wolfe

### Council Members

Hélène Cohen,  
Roberta Byrne,  
Sally Roth,

### Community Rabbi

Rabbi Cliff Cohen

### Life President

David Mirsky

### President

Godfrey Fischer

## Synagogue Contacts

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chairman@tdrs.org.uk

### Rabbi

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### Senior Warden

warden@tdrs.org.uk

### Newsletter

[newsletter@tdrs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tdrs.org.uk)

## The Foxes Go to Lords

*Nathan Fox*

The Fox family found themselves at Lords cricket ground, "The Home of Cricket", on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March and for good reason. After Broadstairs' success last year in the under 13s national cup, the men's side (which Elliot plays in) wanted in on the glory. So, the story begins in Thanet as the side managed to, quite comfortably, win the Thanet indoor league playing the likes of Margate, Westgate and Sandwich.

Next, came the county finals at Canterbury where Broadstairs reached the final with ease and then managed to scrape through the final with two runs off the last ball! Then, they hammered the Surrey champions and then a finals day at Canterbury to find the regional champion loomed. Of course, not wanting to fall short of the youngsters' success, they won this as well and everyone was ready for a trip to Lords.

An early morning even without the clocks going forward didn't help preparation but spirits were high on the coach (or at least until the London traffic kicked in). Once they'd arrived, players and spectators were able to go on the famous Lords tour while the first semi-final took place.



Then came the first match for the men from Thanet and they successfully chased down a total of 128 in a massive (and I mean massive) hall. Then, after a rest, the final commenced and immediately Broadstairs knew they were in for a battle. The first innings ended and left Broadstairs with 171 to chase, a tough ask anywhere let

alone in a pressure situation. They began well but as it got nearer to the end, the



team began to struggle and got fairly close but not quite closed enough.

We are all proud of Elliot for retiring in both matches and taking an important wicket in the first match and a run out in the final. In the end Sarisbury were crowned champions and Broadstairs runners up. Naturally, they were gutted but there was a free bar to raise the spirits once more. So, they didn't quite reach the glory of the under 13s but 2<sup>nd</sup> out of over 1000 clubs. Not bad eh!



## Pesach Message from Board of Deputies President Jonathan Arkush

**THE BOARD  
OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS**



PROUD TO REPRESENT THE COMMUNITY

Pesach is a time both to look back and look forward. We remember the slavery and ultimately the regaining of freedom of our forefathers and we look forward with optimism to what the future holds for the Jewish people.

Our community in Britain has certainly faced some serious issues over the past year but I believe that we can look forward with confidence. The problems of antisemitism have figured prominently in the year gone by but we have taken positive steps to ensure that hatred or prejudice directed against us is called out for what it is and those who trade in abuse suffer the consequences. In these efforts we have had the resolute support of the Government and most leading political figures across the political spectrum. Two years ago Prime Minister Theresa May stood before the meeting of the Board of Deputies and said: "Britain would simply not be Britain without its Jews". As Prime Minister she has overseen the adoption - the first by any country - of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism which includes, among other things, an explicit acknowledgement that the demonisation and singling out of Israel is antisemitic.

We have been strong on antisemitism on the left and in the Labour Party. I was the first witness to give evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Antisemitism and was gratified by its report which responded positively to all of the points the Board of Deputies made in its submission. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has many times since his election as party leader professed "zero tolerance to antisemitism and all forms of racism". With the case against Ken Livingstone to be decided after months of delay and cases of antisemitism in the party still being reported, we have to say that in this case actions will speak louder than words. *(Note: Ken Livingstone's suspension from the Labour Party was announced recently and continues to cause some contention - Ed)*

The Community Security Trust recently released troubling figures on the rise of antisemitism. Without for one moment minimising their implications it is nonetheless important to take note that this is part of a disturbing climate of

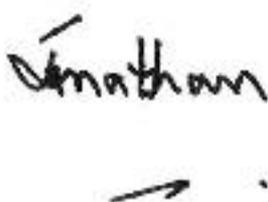
popular resentment that all too often expresses itself against all minorities. In the aftermath of the Brexit vote there was a general rise in hate crimes. I like to think that we can play our own distinct role in influencing the country's political atmosphere. We have begun a busy period of nationwide engagement with Muslim and other communities around the country with the aim of improving relations between faith groups, creating understanding and, importantly, promoting strongly British values. Our team has travelled to Leeds, Leicester and Bradford among other places in the past year, meeting with community leaders, travelling to mosques and schools, and promoting the message of integrating while not losing our identity in the modern Britain whose way of life we believe in.

There have been other achievements. In education our campaign to end the 50 per cent cap on faith admissions to faith-based schools was accepted by the government who agreed with our analysis that the measure has inhibited the creation of Jewish schools and has not demonstrably improved community cohesion. Another major contribution we made in the field of education was to publish the definitive guide for GCSE Judaism, written by renowned educationalist Clive Lawton. This will give those studying the subject a great overview of both the richness of the tradition and the diversity of Jewish life.

We cannot talk of Pesach without mentioning Israel, the modern miracle of the Jewish people. Millennia ago Israel was formed from a nation of slaves but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is transformed into a veritable powerhouse of innovation and success, both economically and culturally and with a robust democratic tradition encompassing freedoms unheard of anywhere else in the Middle East. The people of Israel crossed the Red Sea to achieve freedom and thousands of years later the Jewish people again achieved self-determination in their independent historical land. Israel remains a beacon and a refuge for Jewish people everywhere and we derive huge pride in all of its achievements.

Surely one of the keys to the miraculous survival of the Jewish people is exemplified by the ancient rhythm of Seder night - guided and inspired by our past we look forward to the future.

Chag sameach




## Three of a Kind

### A trio of Royal events puts Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade (JLGB) at the forefront of British Society

It has been a remarkable time for JLGB, celebrating achievements of Jewish young people across the organisation at three different royal events in one week!

These auspicious events, all attended by HRH The Prince of Wales, recognise the tremendous work that everyone at JLGB does to create a positive future for Jewish Youth by delivering faith-sensitive, character building programmes and awards. Each of these opportunities give young people the best possible chance to succeed and become active citizens within our community and wider society.

The week began with a JLGB Band collecting a [Youth United Social Action Award at Buckingham Palace](#) on Tuesday, where they were given the added honour of playing at the Award Ceremony in front of HRH The Prince of Wales.

The very next day, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales visited [Yavneh College in Hertfordshire](#), where the social action undertaken by hundreds of pupils, both inside and outside the classroom was showcased. The Prince met young JLGB representatives from across the country including Greater London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham and Manchester.



As it does in all Jewish schools across the UK, the JLGB provides an age-progressive framework of national awards through JLGB's [evolve, young volunteering initiative](#), where over 6,000 young Jewish people have given back to society through the [DofE](#), [NCS](#), [vInspired](#) and [Yoni Jesner](#) Awards.

To complete the royal trio, [JLGB CEO, Neil Martin](#), went to Buckingham Palace to collect his OBE for Services to Young People and Interfaith Relations, from HRH The Prince of Wales. During Neil's 12 years at the helm, the JLGB has become an

organisation that is truly ahead of the times, leading the way with youth social action and with strong Jewish and British values at the core.

***JLGB President Lord Levy, said recently:***

As President of the JLGB, I am extremely proud of everything JLGB does across all its local groups across and through the strong partnerships it has with all Jewish Schools across the country, to make social action accessible to young people of faith, especially at a time of so much uncertainty around the world. I simply cannot think of any better message and no better organisation than the JLGB that shows both our own community and wider society how you can be proud to be British and proud to be Jewish. JLGB gives young people the tools and skills they need to navigate a digital and global world, empowering them to become the innovative leaders of tomorrow who in turn then give back to society with abundance."

At local JLGB groups up and down the UK, young people from as young as school year 3 all the way up to year 13 and beyond can take part in a huge range of exciting activities, events and community projects in a safe and friendly atmosphere. JLGB gives young people opportunities and skills in many areas including volunteering, teamwork, communication, creativity, organisation, confidence and leadership. In the last 2 years alone, 500 more Jewish young people have joined their local JLGB groups giving them opportunity to make friends that will last a lifetime, not just from the UK but from all around the world.

***JLGB Young Leader, Lily Ross, 19:***

"Reflecting on the opportunities, skills and values that JLGB has given me; quite frankly it has changed my life... it is only now that I have realised the true extent that JLGB has shaped my youth."

There really has never been a better time to join JLGB, attending our local weekly groups is the best investment you can put into your children and grandchildren's future. There are JLGB groups in 30 communities across the country in: Barnet, Birmingham, Borehamwood, Bushey, Cardiff, Edgware, Finchley, Glasgow, Hampstead, Hendon, Kingston, Leeds, Liverpool, Loughton, Manchester, Mill Hill, Newcastle, Nottingham, Redbridge, Shenley, Southend and Manchester.

**Sign up today and get the first two weeks free at [www.jlgb.org/getinvolved](http://www.jlgb.org/getinvolved) or call 0208 989 8990 or email [getinvolved@jlgb.org](mailto:getinvolved@jlgb.org) for more information.**



# PESACH AND OUR JEWISH LIFE TODAY

As we gather with family and friends for our seder nights, there will be many who reflect upon the story of the Haggadah and find meaning for the current day.

At CST, we are dealing every day with the security of the Jewish community and with antisemitism. So, for many of our staff and volunteers, when we sit around our seder tables and discuss Pesach, it will be hard to forget that it has been a busy year.

The number of antisemitic incidents reported to CST has never been higher. Similarly, we have all seen antisemitism in the news far too often, and the Government and UK security services keep reminding us that the threat of terrorism has never been higher.

So, how do we make sense of this at Pesach? Every Jew and every family will have their own opinions and their own conversations, but I hope that when we think about oppression, that we also think about freedom: just as in the Haggadah. For us, that includes being able to lead our Jewish lives in ways that previous generations of Jews would surely envy.

At CST, our job is to keep our community safe and secure, so as we can all enjoy our freedoms. We can only do this with your support.

If someone at your seder is a CST volunteer, thank them for what they do on behalf of us all. If you see antisemitism, please report it to CST. If you worry about antisemitism, then think about the freedoms and opportunities we all enjoy today. Then, do something positive by joining CST, donating to CST, or assisting in another part of our successful British Jewish life.

Finally, may I wish you, your family and friends a *Good Yom Tov* this Pesach.

David S Delew MBA  
CST Chief Executive

CST teams work in every Jewish community. To join us, or donate, or report antisemitism, please see our website [www.cst.org.uk](http://www.cst.org.uk), or call us on 020 8457 9999, or 0161 792 6666.

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## An interfaith prayer as the Brexit process begins

Five faith representatives (Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian) have prepared a bespoke prayer designed to work across their faiths in an effort to reassure communities as we move forward with Brexit. As the Prime Minister triggers the official start of the Brexit process, the five representatives are encouraging their communities to love, rather than fear, the differences we find in our country.

Led by Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, the group are urging "all communities to come together in solidarity to continue working towards a society of peace and tolerance".

The faith representatives are:

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism

Bishop Rob Wickham, Bishop of Edmonton

Imam Qari Asim MBE, Leeds Makkah Mosque

Gurinder Singh Josan, National Executive Member of Sikh Council UK

Cllr Dhruv Patel, Founder & Director of the City Hindus Network

### The prayer

We are a nation proud of our diversity and strong values of inclusion, acceptance and tolerance. Let these values flourish as we embark upon the next stage of our journey together. Let us turn towards each other and not away from each other in times of difficulty. Let our values and our diversity continue to be a beacon of light in the post-Brexit world.

As our great nation embarks upon a new journey outside of the European Union and begins to take its first steps towards a new future, help us to continue to build a strong, inclusive and compassionate society.

Instil in our hearts a deep love, respect and understanding of each other, irrespective of our backgrounds, so that we may be in the strongest position to move forward into the next chapter in its history.

At this time of difficult negotiations and decision-making for our leaders, give strength and wisdom to the authorities so that they take the steps necessary to benefit our nation.

Eternal God, we pray that You enable all communities to come together in solidarity to continue working towards a society of peace and tolerance.

## Senior Rabbis Back East Africa Food Crisis Appeal

Senior rabbis from across the community have united behind World Jewish Relief's initiative to help over 16 million people in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan who need food, water and medical treatment.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Senior Reform Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Liberal Judaism's Chief Executive Rabbi Danny Rich, Senior Masorti Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and Rabbi Joseph Dweck, leader of the S&P Sephardi Community are urging their communities to support WJR's East Africa Food Crisis Appeal.

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## Can You Be Jewish and Not Believe in God?

**Mark St Clare**

It's good being Jewish - Jews tend to be enterprising, adaptable, curious and resourceful, partly through their journey through history.

On Shabbat and festivals we go to Shul to pray, sing, indulge in rituals and read the Torah. This can be uplifting and rewarding. The Torah consists of stories and events initially passed on by word of mouth by a primitive and superstitious people and no doubt accounts of actual events were changed in time - a bit like Chinese whispers. So whether you believe Moses came down from a mountain with Ten Commandments written on a rock, or Jonah lived in the belly of a large fish for 2 days, or Elijah went up to heaven in a fiery chariot, is up to you.

You may also believe, according to the Bible, that when the Messiah returns in 10, 100 or a thousand years you will be raised from the dead and come alive again. However, if God is all mighty and all knowing then you don't actually need to go to shul and pray as he will know what you are going to do or say before you do it. If he doesn't know this, then he's not so powerful a being after all.

We are also the Chosen People - whether God chose us or we chose him. Either way, Jews seem to have had a pretty raw deal. From the Persian and Roman persecutions through medieval times to the Spanish Inquisition, the pogroms in Russia and Europe to finally the Holocaust. Each murder was a person - a man woman or child with hopes, dreams and fears. How could all this disaster happen to the Chosen People?

We also all have had dear relatives and friends who, despite being good caring people, sadly died prematurely. Well, explanations range from the Jews had sinned so brought it upon themselves, or it is a test of our faith, or the most accepted being, God works in mysterious ways, and we cannot possibly understand why he does something. This is surely then the ultimate cop out - as whatever happens there can be no logical reason for it. Many religions have one God and the reward on death, if you led a good life, is heaven, paradise or the Happy Hunting Ground [not sure I would appreciate all those buffalo].

Judaism is a culture and tradition, and Judaism can guide you to live a compassionate, caring and honest life but is it necessary to constantly praise a superior being that is supposed to be overseeing it all? I don't think so. We can all believe what ever we like - believing in something doesn't make it true - I believe I am a great singer and footballer - but I am neither. Of course, I may be missing something truly fundamental here... And, of course, if there is a God he couldn't care less if I believe in him or not!

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