

Pesach Message from the President 5785 / 2025

Pesach is the festival of freedom, where we celebrate our departure from Egypt. None of us needs to be reminded of the bitter parallels we have been experiencing since October 7th 2023, with hundreds of hostages taken on that awful day and held in captivity in awful conditions.

Since the signing of phase one of the ceasefire agreement we have experienced some joy and much heartbreak. There has been celebration as hostages have emerged from their ordeal to be reunited with their families – among them fellow Brit Emily Damari. There has been concern at the condition of hostages who were released in ugly Hamas ceremonies emaciated and unwell. And of course, we all mourned as the coffins of hostages murdered by their captors were received by their distraught loved ones, including the precious Bibas family and Tsachi Idan, cousin of Board of Deputies' staff member Adam Maanit. It has been our absolute determination to campaign until the last hostage is out; with our Adopt a Hostage campaign and vigils outside Downing Street and the Scottish Parliament.

Since October 7th we have all suffered a surge of antisemitism. The UK community needs to feel safe, secure and protected. This is why we have set up a Commission on Antisemitism, led by the Government's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism Lord Mann and former Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt. The Commission will investigate the rise of antisemitism in the UK and make far-reaching recommendations for how to fight antisemitism on our streets, in university campuses, in the media, online and in our workplaces.

Another key pledge I made in my election campaign was to tackle extremism and enhance interfaith relations with the Muslim community. Last year we launched the Optimistic Alliance between Jewish and Muslim communities in which we are tackling anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hatred; challenging extremism and supporting mainstream voices; defending shared religious freedoms; confronting societal challenges like poverty and climate change; and finding ways to engage better over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I was proud to join rabbis from across the UK Jewish community as we presented the far-reaching Drumlanrig Muslim-Jewish Accords to King Charles III in February. There is a long way to go but we have made a determined start.

I have spoken about the problems we face. However, we should also be celebrating our community and its achievements. I am pushing forward plans for a British Jewish Culture Month, with a proposed launch in 2026. In order to inoculate the public against the virus of antisemitism, we need to celebrate and educate about the contribution of our community to our country's society, economy and culture. I hope there will be much more to celebrate in the coming year.

We have gone through one of the toughest periods for the Jewish people in our living memory, but we have resilience in our DNA and we will come back stronger. It just remains for me to wish Pesach Sameach to you and your families from everyone at the Board of Deputies.

Am Yisrael Chai!



Phil Rosenberg
President

