

PESACH MESSAGE

PRESIDENT MARIE VAN DER ZYL

NISSAN 5783



At Pesach, we celebrate the freedom of the Jewish people. It is a joyous festival but it is also the time of year when we recall the suffering of our ancestors and how they fought against and triumphed over adversity.

This year, the cost-of-living crisis means many of us are experiencing real financial hardship. However, as our experience over thousands of years demonstrates, being part of a community means that no one has to suffer alone. We showed through the pandemic that we are stronger together and we can help each other now too, at home and abroad.

For the past year we have witnessed the awful trauma of Ukrainians who have been forced to defend their country from Russian aggression. We at the Board of Deputies have supported the wonderful efforts of World Jewish Relief to help those who are suffering. We have worked hard to coordinate the available resources from the Jewish community to help Ukrainians in the most effective ways. Sadly, a new humanitarian tragedy has also hit Turkey and Syria in the form of a massive earthquake. Again, we support community efforts to help those most in need.

In the past year, the Board of Deputies successfully held the BBC to account for its inaccurate and irresponsible reporting of an antisemitic attack against a group of Jewish teenagers on a bus in Oxford Street. The Board of Deputies lodged a formal complaint with Ofcom, which ruled that the BBC's coverage failed to observe editorial guidelines on both impartiality and accuracy and that the Corporation had made a serious editorial misjudgement.

For many years Stephen Sizer, a rogue Anglican vicar, had been posting egregious material online. Last year, as a result of complaints by the Board of Deputies, a Church of England Tribunal ruled that Sizer had on one occasion "engaged in antisemitic activity" as well as "conduct unbecoming" of a Church of England Minister and conduct that "provoked and offended" the Jewish community over a sustained period. He has now been banned for serving as a Church of England Minister until 2030.

Through our Local Government Seminars, we have educated local and regional politicians about the Jewish community and its concerns, enabling them to gain a better understanding of our community. We have also relaunched the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition which will be travelling around the country educating children and adults about the Jewish way of life. And we are soon to be launching a ground-breaking online secondary school programme about the Jewish people, antisemitism, and how to be an ally against Jew-hatred.

We continue to celebrate the good news of the Abraham Accords for the Middle East. Last year, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak addressed our diplomatic reception celebrating the second anniversary of the Abraham Accords, which normalised relations between Israel, Bahrain, the UAE and Morocco and which gives hope to the entire region.

This is but a snapshot of the extensive and varied work the Board of Deputies does on behalf of us all to protect our religious freedoms and our way of life. Whatever your interests or concerns as a Jew, the Board of Deputies is here for you.

Pesach Sameach to you and your families from everyone at the Board of Deputies.



Marie van der Zyl OBE

President

Board of Deputies of British Jews