

## Pesach Message from the President of the United Synagogue

In 1290, King Edward I banished England's Jews. They would not be allowed to return for more than 300 years. The resettlement under Oliver Cromwell was not straightforward and there were further attempts to expel the Jews. While they failed, it would be another century until Jews could become British citizens and 200 years before they could become an MP without swearing a Christian oath. It was not until 1890 when restrictions for every position in the British Empire, except that of monarch, were removed for Jews.

I was reminded of this recently for two reasons. The first, as we head towards Pesach, is because the story of the Jewish people – at times living as free people in our own land, at times enslaved to others – is one of peaks and troughs. Pesach marks both the nadir: subjugated under an infanticidal tyrant – and the zenith: the Exodus from Egypt which leads to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. These ups and downs have continued for three millennia.

The second reason I had 1890 in my mind is because that year saw the printing of the original Authorised Daily Prayer Book, better known as the Singer's Siddur after its editor, Rev Simeon Singer of the New West End Synagogue. For the first time, Victorian Jews had a siddur with English rubric and translations which gave them immense pride. And since then, the Singer's Siddur, in its various editions, has been a defining text of our community's identity and Minhag Anglia (the practices of the United Synagogue and similar communities). Each new edition has built on Rev Singer's determination to provide, in each generation, a siddur which is as user-friendly as possible. Major new editions were published in 1962, 1990 and most recently in 2006 with the authority of the Chief Rabbi at each time – Chief Rabbis Brodie, Jakobovits and Sacks of blessed memory, respectively.

This year, Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis has authorised an enlarged version of the 2006 edition which is now available to purchase. The page numbers in the new siddur are retained from the 2006 edition. We are grateful to Rosemary Fisch and her family for dedicating this new siddur in memory of the late Bobby Fisch, an outstanding communal leader at Finchley (Kinloss) Synagogue. Designed with a striking blue cover, similar to the 1962 edition, the new siddur includes additional essays, notably an Introduction by the Chief Rabbi on how we learn responsibility through prayer.

Dayan Ivan Binstock of St John's Wood Synagogue and the London Beth Din has produced a *Guide to the Jewish year and prayer incorporating the customs of the United Synagogue*. Going month by month, Dayan Binstock clearly sets the rhythms and practices of daily prayer, whether in shul or not, including helpful charts.

Just as each Hagaddah reflects the local customs of its Jewish community, so too our new siddur showcases our practices. It is fitting therefore that we can make this announcement to our members ahead of Pesach – this year, thank God, without Covid restrictions. A siddur contains statements of our faith and words to help our souls find spiritual expression, praying for ourselves and others, as Jews do daily around the world.

The new siddur is now available for purchase via [www.theus.org.uk/siddur](http://www.theus.org.uk/siddur). We hope it will assist and inspire you, as its predecessors have done since 1890.

Wishing you and your families a chag kasher v'sameach. Have a wonderful Pesach.

**Michael Goldstein**  
President, United Synagogue



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