



new london
synagogue



Towards a World and a Time of Freedom

Pesach is coming – first night Wednesday 1st April. Information below and on the website. In particular, please book if you are planning to join our fabulous Communal Seder Night celebrations. We would love your company, and we need to plan the catering!

It is an odd time to be preparing to celebrate freedom. There are those sprinting back and forth to shelters, and many more for whom shelter feels a far-off dream. That's not even merely about Iran, Lebanon, Israel and others experiencing militarised conflict. There was an attack, yesterday, on a Synagogue in Michigan. One of my Detroit-based colleagues posted of his close connection to the team there. And then there is this creeping sense of violence and real and perceived offense hanging in the air; locally, nationally and internationally.

We are, as ever, grateful to our professional and volunteer security team and working closely with CST and local and national police and political leadership. But also, this is a good time for faith.

My mind turns to the almost-doggerel which ends the Seder; one little goat swept into a cycle of violence – the cat, the dog, the stick and on the list goes. But there is a vast and vital difference between the spiralling song of my non-Jewish youth – The Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, and this song about One Little Goat.

The song about the Old Lady ends in death, of course. But the song about the Goat ends with God defeating death, of course. As an act of faith – and I think it is an act of faith rather than a cool-headed geo-political calculation – we are not spiralling into only ever greater cycles of violence. As an act of faith, I claim there is a force greater than violence, stronger even than death. And with that faith position, if you join me in that faith position, we enter a sort of existential Game Theory experiment. If we hold a space for something than spiralling violence – we make it possible for something stronger than violence to thrive in this world. If we live our lives on the basis that violence is the greatest power in which the world functions – we equally make it so.

I'm reflecting on something I heard, shared by a Vicar at a Mosque – such is my rabbinic existence. Last week, I attended an Interfaith Iftar hosted at the Regents Park mosque at which the Vicar of St Johns Wood Church, The Revd Dr Anders Bergquist shared an observation about friendship (perhaps poorly transcribed by me). The Iftar itself, of course, was a radical act of hospitality offered by our Muslim cousins. And speaking at the dais, reflecting on the often-reported cycles of violence and hatred in our society, the Rev Anders made this simple but exquisite call, "Be friends," he shared, "Be the best friend you can be to your fellow. Bring out the best in your fellow."

He is right, of course, not only to observe that this possibility exists for us, even in our fear and seeking of shelter, but also that, if we dedicate ourselves to this task, we will bring out the best in each other. While that, in itself, will not bring an instant end to war, violence and oppression, it is the best, and I think single, task that can help, in the words of Maimonides, "tilt the scale for ourselves and the whole worlds towards the side of merit, causing deliverance and success," and, dare we say it, building a world in which we, all of us, can be free. May it soon come.

Shabbat Shalom

Rosh Chodesh Nissan is coming – Wednesday night/Thursday.

Pesach follow soon,

Rabbi Jeremy

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Rabbi Jeremy's **Guide to Pesach Kashrut**, with sections on food and a guide to Koshering is available <https://tinyurl.com/nlspesach2026>.

Rabbi Jeremy is also able to serve as agent for the **Sale of Chametz**. This is an extraordinary leniency from the Rabbis, bending over to make the observance of Pesach less onerous and less costly. It is recommended it even if you think you have cleaned perfectly and you don't think you have anything physical to sell. You may appoint Rabbi Jeremy as your agent using this Google Form. <https://tinyurl.com/nlschametz2026>.

This needs to happen before midnight on the Tuesday 31st March. You should then put the *hametz* in a sealed container or room and leave it until after 10pm the night of 9th April. Rabbi Jeremy is only able to sell Chametz in the UK time-zone.

Thank God for Purim

I'm very definitely in the mood for Purim this year. It's not just the fun. It's the sense that in a world of moral collapse and existential danger, there is a story of heroism and bravery.

There's something so moving, to me, especially this year, in the refusal of Mordechai to bow before Haman, the courage Ester shows realising that she has become Queen, "for this very moment" and making the case for the saving of her people. There is something so very contemporary, especially this year, in realising the connections between the sexual impropriety of the beginning of the story and the emergent threat that emerges for all the Jews. There is something so very freeing in having a good ol' chance to boo. The depths, the wit, the savage satire of Megilat Ester has never felt more sharply drawn and more necessary.

Then there is the fun; do join us in costume – you are welcome even not in costume, but even a pocket handkerchief or an extravagant shade of lipstick would count. For our youth – for our next generation – we have activities and groggers. For our bellies we have a delicious post-Megillah feast, replete with pub quiz. We'll be collecting sums to support the work of the Separated Child Foundation, which works to support unaccompanied children refugees in the UK and help them fulfil their potential – Ester too was a separated child.

Youth activities from 5:30pm Monday. Maariv and Megillah reading at 6:30pm to be followed by the Feast. We are still taking bookings for the Feast – [click here https://shulcloud.newlondon.org.uk/event/purim1.html](https://shulcloud.newlondon.org.uk/event/purim1.html). And if you would rather a less boisterous opportunity to mark the festival, we would love your company on Tuesday morning 3rd from 7:30am for Shacharit and Megillah reading.

On Access to the Kottel

Close observers will know of the troubling development in the long story of allowing the Western Wall to be a place for all Jews to gather for prayer. For many years, a section of the Wall to the right of the main Plaza - known as Robinson's Arch or Ezrat Yisrael – has been available for egalitarian services, open to any minyan that did not insist on a separation between men and women and certainly open for women to read from the Torah. Many of our members have been there, some have even celebrated BMs there. For many years the Government has been obligated to upgrade the existing scaffold-supported structure with something more permanent.

A High Court injunction to enforce this obligation prompted far-right Haredi MK Avi Maoz to bring a bill before the Knesset giving the Chief Rabbinate full control over all parts of the wall. At a preliminary meeting, Israeli MKs voted 56-47 in favour of the Bill.

It's deeply disappointing to feel the sharp push-away from those who voted in support of the Bill. It's deeply damaging to the attempt to hold together the People of Israel as one people experiencing mutual obligations no matter where and how we live as Jews. There is more information in the excellent Masorti Judaism newsletter (sign up from the bottom of the page at <https://masorti.org.uk/>). I also recommend the speech given by Rabbi Gilad Kariv MK, formerly head of the Israeli Reform movement, who is emerging as one of the most important voices in favour of both the Jewish and Democratic dreams of the State of Israel. The speech is pugnacious and blunt, but shares powerfully of the relationship between specific actions like this Bill and the future of our relationship with the State of Israel.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1632846154535159>

Please also consider signing this petition on the Bill and access to the Kotel.

https://lp.landing-page.mobi/index.php?page=landing&id=623423&token=50da2b63584b8091afdf7325d985e22e&CustomerId=1073627&ProjectId=1059306&Domain=lp6.me&Key=6NN2S&i=18632&utm_source=InforuMail&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Acts+against+Kotel+bill&upixel=5ic7vbihlr50000029hl6sg90geprh

Shabbat Shalom,
Chag Purim Sameach,

Rabbi Jeremy