

A Rosh Hashanah message from Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy, the CEOs of Liberal and Reform Judaism.

The Yamim Noraim are a time for reflection; for pressing pause to think back on the year that has passed and imagine what the next year might bring.

This year, reviewing our lives feels particularly exciting. Over the last few months we have taken an enormous leap, both professionally and personally, which means that this year's High Holy Days will be very different to those of the past.

In April, the Movement for Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism announced that we would be working in close partnership to create a new movement to represent all of Britain's Progressive Jews. We recognise that this announcement took many by surprise. Nonetheless, the response has been positive, and that this is a welcome move felt by many to be long overdue. The enthusiastic support has been overwhelming within our clergy bodies, our communities and in the wider Jewish world.

In May, we both began to work two days a week on this project, which will expand in November when Josh will join MRJ full time.

Although we are still in the early stages of the project there are already tangible ways in which it is making a difference. We have been moved by the way in which Liberal and Reform communities and staff have welcomed each other, and by the new space that has been created to work collaboratively on projects.

We have begun to raise initial funds so that we can start the work without taking away from the two movements. As we build a new organisation, they will continue to focus on the crucial support they provide to our communities, youth movements and members.

Most significantly, we have witnessed the way in which combining our voice, modelling collaborative leadership and the power of a trusting partnership has already had a significant impact on the Jewish, faith and national stages. From every corner we are being invited in and the profile and optimism of Progressive Judaism in the UK is on the rise.

Some will say this has been tried before and that it did not work, but we are confident that this time is different.

This is a new moment: our clergy are together, our boards are committed, we have symmetry of leadership, and there is a new commitment to diversity of practice within shared values. The new language of this moment is also powerful. We are not talking about merger, but co-creation. One in which we reaffirm the importance of movement, of being stronger by working together. We see the possibilities that are created when we ask what we can build together, to take this opportunity for renewal and imagination.

And that is where you come in.

We need you to help us develop the vision; to help us imagine what a shared, sustainable and effective movement will look like. To help us think through how we have a more powerful voice in the Jewish, faith and national spheres, how we invest in what makes Jewish life flourish, how we recognise the centrality of our synagogues and communities and support their development, and how we ensure that we have growth and breadth for the future.

After the High Holy Days, we will be visiting Reform and Liberal communities, asking what we can build, sharing ideas and, of course, answering all your questions. Everyone's voice here is essential

if we are going to get this right and build the movement we all deserve. When we visit your community later in the year, we very much hope you will join us as we shape the future together.

As the vision grows, we will also begin the work of building. An Advisory Board will oversee the emerging movement. Working groups will ask the big questions and make recommendations on specific areas, as well as having detailed discussions, covering governance, finance, assets, communities, rabbinic bodies, status and outreach, youth, education, leadership and so on. We will soon have an active website with opportunities to contribute as well as regular updates and information.

As we approach the end of 5783, we are delighted by the leap we have taken and the progress we have already made. In the short time our movements have been working together we have already made a huge impact. With your input, support and commitment, the year ahead will be one in which we build together an exciting future for Progressive Judaism in the UK.