

## Message from the President of the United Synagogue

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Each Pesach around the Seder table, we sing *Vehi She'amda*, a song about God saving the Jewish people from the enemies who try to destroy us in each generation.

This year, the song feels particularly poignant. This is the first Pesach since the worst massacre the Jewish people have experienced since the Holocaust and I suspect as we sing these words this year, our thoughts will turn to the pain and suffering which our brothers and sisters in Israel have experienced since October 7, the hostages who remain in Hamas captivity as I write this message, as well as the difficulties we have faced here with the alarming rise in antisemitism.

The first line, "Vehi she'amda la'avoteinu velanu", translates to "It is **this** which has stood by our ancestors and us." It is a line which connects our current suffering to the suffering of generations before us, but also to the survival of the Jewish people. This message of hope will feel especially pertinent this year – that the Jewish people will survive this too.

The Chief Rabbi explains that the word **this** refers to God, our traditions and our texts which have sustained us for more than 3,000 years. During Seder nights we move from telling the story of Jewish suffering to focus on the Exodus from Egypt and our redemption from slavery. Seder night is the most observed of all Jewish traditions. We therefore feel not only a deep connection with our ancestors, but with Jews all over the world who are recounting the same story.

Through all of the darkness, it can be difficult to remember the light that has also shone through in these past few months. We have seen amazing unity amongst the Jewish community, both in Israel and here.

We have felt this unity deeply at the United Synagogue, with our communities running solidarity events, vigils, hearing testimonies from survivors and family members of those killed or captured, as well as many inspirational and moving talks. Many of our Rabbis, Rebbetzins and leaders have also been to Israel on solidarity missions in the past few months, where they have seen the aftermath of the worst form of evil, as well as the incredible way that the country has come together to support one another.

My message to you this Pesach is to look for the light amongst the darkness. The good amongst the evil. It is that hope and unity which has kept us going and has kept the Jewish people surviving.

We continue to pray for the release of the hostages and peace in Israel.

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



**Michael Goldstein**  
President, United Synagogue



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