



Reform Judaism Election Manifesto 2019

**'Where there are no people of visionary
courage, do everything you can to fulfil that
role yourself'** (*Rabbi Hillel, Ethics of the Fathers 2 v.5-6*)

רבי מורתי מנלחי
ASSEMBLY OF UK
REFORM RABBIS & CANTORS

WE BELIEVE VOTING IS A RELIGIOUS DUTY

Voting is a mitzvah, empowering us to shape the future. In our Manifesto, we have identified eight policy areas that we believe are vital for any future government to address. In each policy area we explain the associated Jewish values, identify the problems we seek to address and provide possible solutions.

DEMOCRACY AND POLARISATION

“We must not appoint a leader over the Community without first consulting them” — Talmud Berakhot 55a.

The problem:

- The number of hate crimes occurring in the UK is rising as is the level of abuse directed towards those in positions of power¹
- Levels of trust in the crucial institutions of our democracy are demonstrably low²
- Society is becoming more polarised. Public discourse is increasingly inflammatory

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Safeguard the independent and accountable nature of democratic and civil institutions
- Address the underlying causes of isolation and disenfranchisement felt within some communities
- Introduce measures to protect people in public life from abuse

CLIMATE CRISIS

In Genesis, God granted humans 'stewardship' over the Earth and responsibility for its long term good.

The problem:

- The 2018 IPCC Report suggests that significant action must be taken before 2030 in order to limit the worst damage of climate change, by preventing a temperature rise of more than 1.5°C³
- The climate crisis disproportionately impacts lower income groups⁴

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Work towards the UK achieving net zero carbon emissions
- Substantially increase investment into the production of and research into green energy
- Create new jobs in green energy and offer retraining for all workers in carbonised industries

MENTAL HEALTH

We are obligated by 'Pikuach Nefesh' - saving a life. Mental illness/distress can be a matter of life and death.

The problem:

- Rates of mental distress are worsening and mental health services lack the resources to deal with this. Suicide is the leading cause of death among males aged 18-50⁵
- 28% of NHS activity is used to treat mental illness but NHS mental health departments only receive 13% of allocated funding⁶

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Achieve parity for mental and physical health in the NHS.

LGBT+ ISSUES

All humans are created *'B'tzelem Elohim'* - in the image of God. We all deserve equality, regardless of sexuality and gender identity.

The problem:

- 16% of lesbian, gay and bisexual people were victim to a hate crime in 2017
- 41% of trans people were victim to a hate crime in 2017⁷
- LGBT+ people are more likely to be affected by issues such as homelessness, poor mental health and addiction. The services providing help on these issues have had their funding cut⁸
- Backlash in some areas against Government plans to make education more LGBT+ inclusive

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Ensure compulsory LGBT+ inclusive Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in all schools, including faith and private
- Adequately fund services addressing problems disproportionately affecting LGBT+ people, including LGBT+ homelessness; providing comprehensive mental health support and making PrEP widely available on the NHS

HOMELESSNESS

Halakhah (Jewish Law) emphasises that all people should have stable housing.

The problem:

- Shelter estimates that at least 320,000 people in the UK are homeless⁹
- The rate of rough sleeping in England has increased significantly since 2010¹⁰

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Provide short term measures to reduce the immediate numbers of those left homeless
- Prevent landlords from discriminating against those on benefits
- Promote the large-scale construction of social housing and affordable housing in the private sector to allow everyone, regardless of wealth, access to secure accommodation

RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

- Jewish history warns us of the danger of racism. We know that while racism may start with one minority, it ends with an attack on all minorities
- It is vital to oppose racism when directed at us and to ally with other communities facing similar threats

The problem:

- While the increase in prevalence of hate crimes is partially due to better recording techniques, certain political events in recent years have led to clear upturns in the number of incidents¹¹

- While Britain is still one of the least anti-Semitic countries in the world¹², the number of recorded anti-Semitic incidents is at record highs¹³

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Tackle incitements to hatred in our political and local community cultures
- Encourage groups and individuals to discuss differences constructively

REFUGEES

- “Love the stranger, for you were once strangers in the Land of Egypt” — Deuteronomy 10:19
- Many of our families owe their lives to the British Government’s acceptance of Jewish refugees, such as through the Kindertransport

The problem:

- We face one of the largest refugee and humanitarian crises since World War II¹⁴ and Britain’s response does not equate to a ‘fair share’ of the work¹⁵

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Extend Britain’s commitment to resettling child refugees and reuniting refugee families
- Commit to a more ambitious target for the number of refugees the UK is willing to take

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- We are proud progressive Zionists who believe staunchly in the need for a secure and democratic Jewish State alongside a Palestinian State
- We believe the Israeli Government should be guided by values of the Declaration of Independence -
 - "...based on freedom, justice and peace...; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex¹⁶"

The problem:

- The peace process has stalled
- The leadership of both sides act in ways that are deliberately detrimental to the implementation of a long term peaceful outcome

We encourage voting for policies that will:

- Promote a peaceful two-State resolution to the conflict on the basis of self-determination for both Palestinians and Israelis
- Call on the leadership of both sides to prioritise a peaceful solution to the conflict

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Hate Crime Statistics
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8537#fullreport>, House of Commons Library, 28/10/19
- ² Audit of Political Engagement 16: The 2019 Report
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- ³ p8 Hansard Society
- ⁴ Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 degrees, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- ⁴ Climate Change and Social Inequality
https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152_2017.pdf UN Dept. of Economics & Social Affairs, October 2017
- ⁵ Mental health: 10 charts on the scale of the problem <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-41125009> BBC, 04/12/19
- ⁶ Parity of esteem <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/parity-esteem> Centre for mental health, 03/01/19
- ⁷ LGBT in Britain: Hate crime and discrimination
https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_hate_crime.pdf Stonewall, 2017
- ⁸ Studies on LGBTQ+ youth homelessness, <https://www.akt.org.uk/news/world-homeless-day-2018> Albert Kennedy Trust, July 2018
- ⁹ 320,000 people in Britain are now homeless, as numbers keep rising
https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/320,000_people_in_britain_are_now_homeless_as_numbers_keep_rising Shelter, 22/11/18
- ¹⁰ Rough sleeping statistics Autumn 2018, England
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781567/Rough_Sleeping_Statistics_2018_release.pdf Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 25/02/19
- ¹¹ Hate Crime, England and Wales
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748598/hate-crime-1718-hosb2018.pdf Home Office, 16/10/19
- ¹² Global 100 United Kingdom, <https://global100.adl.org/country/united-kingdom/2019> Anti-Defamation League, 2019
- ¹³ Antisemitic incidents report January-June 2019
<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2019/08/01/antisemitic-incidents-report-january-june-2019> Community Security Trust, 01/08/19
- ¹⁴ Proportion displaced out of the world population 2009-18
<https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/> UNHCR Global Trends
- ¹⁵ UK is failing to take 'fair share' of Syrian refugees, says Oxfam
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/29/uk-is-failing-to-take-fair-share-of-syrian-refugees-says-oxfam> The Guardian 29/03/16
- ¹⁶ Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel
<https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx> Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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