

Jews on the Jouse

June 2026 Sivan 5786 *Edition 30

ברוכים הבאים!

Welcome to the thirtieth edition of the YLJC newsletter!

In this edition, we look at the latest developments around Clifford's Tower with a particular focus on the wording of the plaque. There is information from our Chair about our growing community as well as the usual news about events from the Movement for Progressive Judaism and the Jewish Historical Society of England.

I hope you all have an enjoyable summer.

RUTH MORRIS



CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED!

Your community newsletter needs you!
Please send your articles to
info@jewsinyork.org.uk. The
deadline for the next edition
of the newsletter is 28th August 2026.



CHAIR'S WORD

As we gather together as a community, we are reminded of the true strength and beauty of Jewish life — the generations who stand side by side, learning from one another, supporting one another, and celebrating together.

Over the last three months, it has been especially moving to welcome new members and families into our community. Every new face brings fresh energy, new friendships, and a shared commitment to Jewish values and tradition. We are proud to continue building a warm, inclusive, and vibrant community where everyone feels they belong.

One of the greatest joys for any Jewish community is watching our young people grow. Seeing our children develop in confidence, knowledge, and identity is a blessing beyond words. Celebrating their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs is not only a milestone for each family, but for the entire community. These moments remind us that our traditions remain strong and that the future of Jewish life rests in capable and passionate hands. We are incredibly proud of every young person who steps up to the bimah and embraces their place within our heritage.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the deeply troubling rise in antisemitic behaviour we are witnessing across the UK. Incidents of hatred, intimidation, and prejudice against Jewish people have increased in ways that are both upsetting and concerning for many members of our community. No one should ever feel afraid to express their faith, culture, or identity.

LUCY SKELTON-MEECH
CHAIR YLJC



CLIFFORD'S TOWER DEVELOPMENT

After extensive consultation and research and collaboration over many years, a small team has now determined the wording of the replacement plaque that sits at the foot of Clifford's Tower and currently only names the perpetrator. The current wording is:



We are especially grateful to the work of Dr Hampson and Dr Jenkins at The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York for their research and advice, and the input and knowledge of English Heritage and York Civic Trust and various Jewish experts for their assistance, which has resulted in these proposals which all consider will give greater respect and longevity and will more accurately tell the story of those who tragically died here so many years ago.

The current housing for the plaque is to be retained and is to stay in its current location near the foot of the steps up to Clifford's Tower, in order that this revised plaque will inform those who visit for the first time of the atrocity that happened there in 1190. Much more history of the site as a whole will be included in the revised proposals currently being finalised for the My Castle Gateway site, which will now include a clearly designated 1190 Memorial Space for contemplative reflection, to be embedded within the wider histories of the Castle and Eye of York of the site as a whole.

see My Castle Gateway – Shaping the future through open conversations

1190 memorial space – My Castle Gateway

The Council has advised that it is keen to build the revised wording of the plaque into the wider delivery



programme for the Castle/ EoY project. YLJC is also in discussions with them about how best to preserve the current / old plaque in due course.

Photo from English Heritage

The agreed revised replacement plaque - in lieu of the above - will now read:

In March 1190, Rabbi Yom Tov and the Jews of York
sought protection in the royal castle on this site.

The few who agreed to convert to Christianity in
exchange for safe passage were killed upon leaving
the tower. On Friday 16 March, under attack from a
violent mob and facing certain death, those remaining
chose to die by their own hands

תנצב"ה

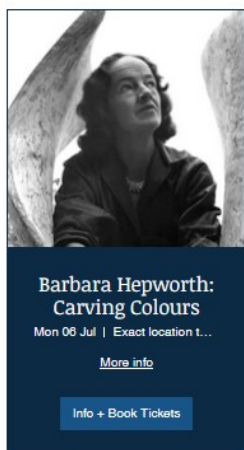
May their souls be bound up in the bond of life

York Liberal Jewish Community has been delighted to work with those leading experts and are grateful for their knowledge, time and commitment to achieve this. We also thank the City of York Council for working with us all as consultees - on this replacement plaque, on the Castle Gateway redevelopment proposals, and other Jewish historical significant sites within the city.

LILIAN COULSON
ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



Upcoming Events



JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ENGLAND (JHSE)

Founded in 1893, the Jewish Historical Society of England is the oldest historical and learned society of its kind in Europe. There are a number of events, both in-person and over Zoom, being run by the Society over the summer months.

For more information and how to book, see <https://www.jhse.org/>



JEAN HERSH z"l, BELOVED WIFE OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR AREK HERSH

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Jean Hersh z"l, beloved wife of Holocaust Survivor Arek Hersh, who passed away this morning in Leeds.

Jean accompanied Arek on many March of the Living trips to Poland and became an integral part of the MOTL family. A true force of nature, she was instrumental in ensuring that as many people as possible heard Arek's testimony and learned from his experiences.

Fondly known to many as "Queen Jean," she brought warmth, laughter, and comfort wherever she went, lifting spirits even during the most emotional moments. Alongside her unwavering support and compassion, Jean was deeply committed to Holocaust education and to ensuring the horrors of the past would never be forgotten.

The impact Jean made together with Arek is immeasurable, and her loss will be felt profoundly by all who knew her.

We will miss her dearly and extend our heartfelt condolences to Arek and the entire Hersh family. We wish them a long life.

Photo credit: Sam Churchill Photography

Information from: March of the Living



We are delighted to announce a very special week, in June 2026, celebrating Progressive Judaism in the UK and around the world!

We start with two parallel events in the same gorgeous Northamptonshire hotel, which you can switch between as you choose:

Thursday 18 – Sunday 21 June: Shirei Chagigah, our musical experience.

Shirei Chagigah is a conference that focuses on Jewish music, prayer, and spirituality. It is for leaders of music and prayer, and those of us who just love to sing and learn!

Led by dynamic and inspiring teachers from the UK and abroad, it's about singing, composing, prayer-leading, learning new melodies and, above all, creating community.

It is an opportunity to relax, be spiritually uplifted, reflect on the role of music in our services, and – if you choose to do so – further develop as a service leader or music leader that you've always wanted to be. Shirei Chagigah blends the traditional and the new. Whether you want to incorporate choral or folk music, new melodies or old standards, start a choir or simply sing for your own pleasure, this is where you will find like-minded individuals and teachers to join, learn alongside, and celebrate with you! This then is joined by the new flagship national conference for our new Movement for Progressive Judaism.

Friday 19 – Sunday 21 June:

Hineinu, our brand-new flagship conference

Hineinu: Here We Are, is more than just a name. It's a statement of presence and responsibility – a chance to come together across backgrounds, geography and generations.

It will combine the best of our previous Reform and Liberal conferences, but with more participants, more wonderful speakers and session leaders, and more opportunities to explore your Progressive Judaism.

Most importantly of all, it will be a key milestone as, together, we begin to shape the future of our new unified Movement.

Both Shirei Chagigah and Hineinu will take place at a gorgeous hotel in Northamptonshire. Your ticket includes a hotel room, all meals, the full programme, and the option to switch between Hineinu and Shirei Chagigah, including all tracks within both, as you wish

Book your place today, so that you don't miss out!

See: <https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/celebrate-progressive-judaism/>



PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM EDUCATION HUB PODCAST LAUNCHES

The second season of the Progressive Judaism Education Hub – titled Principles of Progressive Judaism – is now a full Spotify Podcast and YouTube Series, thanks to funding from the NLPS Trust.



Over 11 episodes, leading Progressive rabbis and educators deliver fascinating sessions on topics including God and belief, liturgy, Jewish law, egalitarianism, marrying in, Jewish status, Zionism and, most recently, disability.

Whether you're new to Jewish studies, seeking to deepen your understanding or just interested in finding out more about the 200+ year history of Progressive Judaism, this series illuminate the shared ideals and transformative journeys that have shaped the Judaism we know and love today.

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/04EKD0OyiGNT3VlcXwqk3f>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@progressivejudaismuk>



Further information on future seasons of the Education Hub will follow soon.

THE ULTIMATE MITZVAH

It is a good thing to give time and expertise to a faith community. It is a mitzvah. It is only through this that most communities survive, especially when the community is relatively new. For example some people must take responsibility for being committee members and these people are generally visible to the congregation. Others have the knowledge and expertise to lead the services, and be involved with the education of the young people and those requiring assistance. There are lots of people preparing food, setting out chairs and generally helping to enable a service to run smoothly; these are indeed fulfilling mitzvot. Most people, especially new members, would love to do something for the community but are unsure what to do.

Let me offer the ultimate Mitzvah: The Chevra Kaddish which is often referred to as "The Sacred Sisterhood/ Brotherhood who perform tahara for those who have passed away. This is the greatest mitzvah of all. As we all know the only certainty in life is that one day we will die, and when that happens we will need to be prepared for burial. It is a very meaningful experience to wash and prepare someone's physical remains. It is performed with care and dignity, working as a team of four people. Some are very experienced whilst others are relatively new to this. But full training will be given, before, during and after the procedure, and no one will be asked to do this without experienced support.

It is important that a Jewish woman/ man is prepared for burial by other Jewish women/men, washing and preparing according to tradition and the faith, reciting prayers. The reason that I think that it is such a huge mitzvah is that you are the last person on earth to be able to help that person, and because of this they cannot say thank you. Also the general congregation don't know who you are so it is like 'Good work by stealth.'

THE TAHARA TEAM