

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE CHAPLAINCY

HOPE IS A VERB

A year ago, no one could have imagined how much our lives would change. No one could have predicted the 'new normal'. It has been a tough year filled with pain, loss, grief, fear, and anxiety; the future seems so bleak. It may feel like the pandemic is never-ending, but with the tremendous efforts of the scientific community, there is a glimmer of light at the end of this very long, dark tunnel. Some of the harshest restrictions we have faced as a country over the last few months have coincided with the beginning of the vaccination programme which promises to end the need for such harsh social distancing measures.

As a country, we have found the strength to be optimistic that the pandemic would end by a certain point, only to be disappointed as reality has hit hard once more.

But optimism is not the same as hope. The former Chief Rabbi, the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks once commented that the Hebrew Bible is not a collection of stories about morality and Divine reward and punishment, but rather "the principled defeat of tragedy in the name of hope." Optimism, he writes, is the "naïve belief that things will get better" whereas "hope requires us to work together to make things better." While optimism is a passive desire without the compulsion or responsibility to do anything, hope is the active call to duty, grounded with honesty and integrity to resolve the challenges we face together. Hope is not some romantic wistful fantasy; it is the unification of humanity in the struggle against despair.

This resonates with the Hebrew word for hope (*tikvah*) which relates to the verbs meaning 'to gather to act' and 'to strive for a particular goal'. Hope creates a bridge between the dark anguish of the present and the prospects of a brighter future.

While we have rightly focused on the terrible physical effects of this pandemic, humanity is facing a tidal wave of mental health crises, as well as economic uncertainty. Yet history bears testimony that these circumstances are never permanent and if a collective effort is made, we can change them for the better. The Qur'an reminds its readers that after every difficulty, a time of ease will follow.

The pandemic took all our attention and for some time Brexit was almost forgotten. We are now out of the European Union. No matter whether we voted to leave or remain, the deed is now done. We must now unite and focus our energies to make this island nation filled with hope. We must find ways of enabling this 'new norm' with our neighbours across the channel to flourish and continue to be a warm one. This is vital for the well-being and prosperity of all.

If anything is worrying you and you would like to talk about it, our chaplains are here to listen and offer help. Please do be in touch and together we can build our hope in a better future. And don't forget you can now listen to our weekly Monday podcast!

Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman, Jewish Chaplain
Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Muslim Chaplain



CHAT TO A CHAPLAIN

Just to remind you even if we are not always visible in Canary Wharf, we are still happy to catch up over a coffee either in person or virtually! Contact us via our contacts page on the website.

www.canarywharfchaplaincy.co.uk

UPCOMING FAITH EVENTS

JUDAISM

January 28th – Tu B'Shvat (New Year for Trees)

BUDDHISM

January 8th – Nirvana Day

CHRISTIAN

February 14th – St. Valentine's Day

HINDU

February 16th – Vasant Panchami

CHRISTIAN

February 16th – Shrove Tuesday

CHRISTIAN

February 17th – Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent

JEWISH

February 26th – Purim