



# Ephraim Mirvis chosen as new UK chief rabbi

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**Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis is to become the UK's next chief rabbi, the Office of the Chief Rabbi has confirmed to the BBC.**

The 55-year-old, a former chief rabbi of Ireland, will succeed the current chief rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, when he steps down next year. Sacks, 64, has held the post of chief rabbi since 1991. The role is traditionally seen as the figurehead of British Jews, although it is only officially representative of the United Synagogue, the biggest wing of orthodox Judaism in the UK. The chief rabbi does not officially represent other branches of Judaism.

The Chief Rabbinate Trust said in a statement quoted by the BBC: "The Chief Rabbinate Trust can this evening confirm that the consultative group has endorsed a recommendation by the working group to appoint Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis as the 11th chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, subject to appropriate contractual agreement."

Mirvis, who was born in South Africa and is married with four sons, is currently rabbi at Finchley Synagogue in north London. He was a rabbi in Dublin before becoming Ireland's chief rabbi in 1985, a post he held until 1992.

Like most of his predecessors, Mirvis is not British-born. He comes from a family of rabbis and teachers. His grandfather, Rev Lazar Mirvis, was a minister in Johannesburg, while his father, Rabbi Lionel Mirvis, led the Claremont Synagogue and also the Wynberg Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town. His mother, Freida, was principal of the Athlone Teachers Training College, which, during the apartheid years, was the only college for black teachers of pre-school instruction in South Africa.

After leaving Cape Town for Israel, where he attended a number of yeshivot and obtained his semicha (rabbinical qualification), Mirvis married Zimbabwe-born Valerie Kaplan, a former senior social worker with Jewish Care, who now works for a local authority in the same capacity. The couple have four sons.

Between 1992 and 1996 he served as the rabbi of Marble Arch Synagogue. Since 1996 he has become synonymous with the ever-growing Finchley Synagogue, one of the biggest congregations in London.

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