



"We need to face up to common challenges"

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March 23, 2017 - Jonathan Arkush has become the first Board of Deputies President in living memory to address the United Synagogue Council.

Jonathan told the council, which is made up of representatives from every synagogue within the organisation, that the Jewish community needed to adapt to face “common challenges”.

Alongside his remarks on the Board’s role in protecting and defending the community, citing attacks on shechita, brit milah and Israel, he gave some more personal reflections.

He said: “The world around us is changing and if you don’t adapt you die. We need to work out how we can recreate the vitality and dynamism of Halachah. I worry it is becoming fossilised – a fossil is an artefact whose essential quality is that it is dead. That is not the future for our community.”

Jonathan, a member of Borehamwood and Elstree United Synagogue, added: “We live in the 21st century and cannot ignore the challenges it throws up. The role of women in today’s world, for example, raises issues for our community that cannot be ducked. We need to be able to apply a creative Halachic approach to the issues confronting us and find solutions. I also think we need to rediscover an openness of approach in how we engage with each other and the outside world. I dislike the suggestion of a gulf in the United Synagogue between viewpoints labelled ‘modern orthodox’ and ‘Charedi’. We are all Jews and we face common challenges which we have to work together to solve”.

Jonathan also said that there was nothing to fear from taking different viewpoints within the community. “Diversity is a strength. We can disagree as long as that conversation is respectful and without personal animosity.”

Source: [Board of Deputies of British Jewsh.](#)