"Our ability to create inclusive physical and conceptual spaces where all members of the Jewish community will feel at home is predicated on accepting that there need be no discord between authentic orthodox Judaism and inclusivism."

friendly, empowering them to develop their connection to orthodox Jewish life, learning and observance in whatever way possible.

In practice this means developing an awareness of how our communal spaces may seem to LGBT people – how people speak to and about those who may not fit conventional stereotypes, whether they are welcomed with the same warmth as others, how the rabbi and other key stakeholders interact with them and how sensitive topics are addressed in public discourse.

"It is a privilege to engage in this process and to work with others to promote an inclusive, yet authentic, Torah Judaism."

Contrary to popular misconception, the *halachic* (Jewish legal) issues surrounding single-gender intimacy do not preclude an inclusivist stance in communal life. The Torah clearly proscribes certain relationships, something that is not subject to change. Yet this need not impact on how one formulates and implements a welcoming and non-judgemental approach to members of the LGBT community. Put simply, how orthodox Jewish leaders and lay people should engage with LGBT people is not a narrow *halachic* issue. Instead it is guided by the broader ethical principle of *menshlichkeit* (honourable, sensitive behaviour), embracing the *tzelem Elokim* (image of God) in every human being.

There is nothing revolutionary in this attitude. It is axiomatic within centrist orthodoxy that those who are unable to subscribe to any aspect of observance or belief – for whatever reason – are welcomed, included and encouraged to practise as much as they are able. Yet for some reason, existential challenges to full orthodox Jewish practice, like those that may be experienced by members of the LGBT community, have historically been treated less favourably than religious challenges arising from life-choices such as diet and employment. Whether informed by prejudice or misinformation about authentic Jewish values, this attitude has no place in a contemporary orthodox Jewish community. And understandably, it has led some LGBT people to conclude that they are unwanted in our communal spaces and, by extension, must look elsewhere for welcoming and meaningful Jewish life. This is an unconscionable outcome, thankfully one that current thought and practice is rapidly reversing.

Although I have focused mostly on shuls (synagogues), this approach should also serve as a benchmark for other communal spaces within the mainstream orthodox Jewish framework, such as schools and youth movements. It is especially important in the campus work I oversee and it is reflected in our recruitment, training and protocols. It is a privilege to engage in this process and to work with others to promote an inclusive, yet authentic, Torah Judaism.

Rabbi Dr Harvey Belovski *is spiritual leader of Golders Green Synagogue, CEO of University Jewish Chaplaincy, principal of Rimon Jewish Primary School, rabbi of Kisharon and head of modern Jewish thought at the London School of Jewish Studies.*

Working in the UK Jewish community to promote LGBT inclusion

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Denominational perspectives on LGBT inclusion

Liberal Judaism

Liberal Judaism has long welcomed people identifying as LGBTQI into its congregations as members, teachers and rabbis. Liberal Judaism believes Torah was written by fallible human beings anchored in the customs and societies of their time and place and should be responded to as such. We must attempt to understand, historically and psychologically, why the biblical writers believed and legislated as they did, and then to evaluate their teachings in the light of both the factual knowledge and the ethical insights of our own day.

Liberal Judaism celebrates the diversity of God's creation and believes we must not be complacent, but must remain vigilant in safeguarding the rights of all. We believe that it is morally wrong to harbour prejudice or to practise discrimination against anyone because of their sexual orientation or gender identification and we reject the use of Torah to justify such discrimination.

"Liberal Judaism celebrates the diversity of God's creation and believes we must not be complacent, but must remain vigilant in safeguarding the rights of all."

Liberal Judaism has been and continues to be a vocal advocate for LGBTQI rights. It was the first British Jewish movement to offer commitment ceremonies to Jewish same-sex couples and to publish a liturgy for same-sex couples, with its *brit ahava*, prepared by Rabbi Mark Solomon and published in 2005 following the Civil Partnership Act of 2004.

Liberal Judaism campaigned for the Equal Marriage Act; its chief executive Rabbi Danny Rich in giving evidence to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee in February 2013 reiterated Liberal Judaism's stance on the issue, stating, "although Liberal Judaism respects the right of other religious movements to decline to conduct marriages which go against their teachings, and to have this right protected in law, it also seeks, in the name of freedom of religion, the right to conduct marriages which it sees as legitimate, and as an important pastoral service to its members."

"Liberal Judaism has been and continues to be a vocal advocate for LGBTQI rights."

Liberal Judaism proudly supported the Rainbow Jews project which collected oral histories to document and celebrate LGBTQI Jewish History in Heritage in the UK. Recently it has also supported the Ritual Reconstructed Project which looks at the ways Jews identifying as LGBTQI use and reinvent rituals to connect their sexual identity and orientation and their Judaism. It is also hosting the Twilight People project which is documenting the often hidden histories of transgender and gender-variant people of faith.

Rabbi Janet Darley *is Rabbi for South London Liberal Synagogue, prior to this she was a Senior lecturer in Economics at Kingston University.*

Please note, the language used in this document reflects each author's individual choices

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Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism is diverse. It is not prescriptive. Reform Jews, their rabbis and their communal leaders live in a dynamic, changing, creative and sometimes even tense relationship with the Judaism of the past and of the future. This diversity and breadth of membership means that at times we do not agree with each other. Yet there is at the same time a deep and widely held belief in the primacy of this ethical truth: we are all created *b'tselem Elohim*, in God's image. The creation story teaches that,

"In God's own image He created him, male and female God created them."

This means that even the very expression and diversity of gender itself, so central to our human experience, somehow reflects the will of our Creator.

"RSY Netzer, our independent youth movement, has led the way in opening up opportunities for learning about sexuality and gender."

Reform Judaism is changing. In spring of 2013, both the Assembly of Rabbis and the movement leadership board voted in support of equal marriage legislation. In December 2014, the first fully fledged legal Jewish marriages were celebrated in Reform synagogues; some ten years after Reform rabbis began creating blessings for same sex couples entering Civil Partnerships.

Like in every process of change, parts of this diverse movement are moving more quickly than others. RSY Netzer, our independent youth movement, has led the way in opening up opportunities for learning about sexuality and gender. Synagogue communities are inclusive and on the whole are welcoming to LGBT people who are either in couples or on their own. Very few are at the stage of actively celebrating difference by featuring this sense of welcome and affirmation publicly, but that too will one day come.

Many Reform rabbis create unique services and ceremonies to mark significant moments in people's lives. This may be part

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of the reason why there is no standard order of service for a same sex couple who are marrying, or becoming parents. There is no gender inclusive *ketubah* (marriage document) yet. The specific needs and experiences of LGBT people have not yet made their way into our prayer books. But Reform Judaism in the UK is moving forward along the path toward a future that is a much more accurate reflection of human diversity, created in God's image.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu *is Rabbi for Kehila North London, Director of Youth, Education and Development at Finchley Reform Synagogue and a teacher at Leo Baeck College.*

Masorti Judaism

The Masorti movement has gone through a challenging process during the last ten years in establishing its views on how to involve LGBT Jews in the community. The question has always been "how", not "whether", as we all agree that LGBT Jews must be welcomed into our communities as they are, be loved and respected.

The main two issues are rabbinical ordination for openly gay students and commitment ceremonies (weddings or similar) for gay couples.

The question on ordination is never whether a gay Jew is a good person, or about his or her intellectual capabilities. The main obstacle is the familiar verse in Leviticus prohibiting homosexual relations. The view of the opponents of gay ordination

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is that a rabbi should be an example for his/her community and as we wouldn't ordain a person who violates Shabbat in public (therefore transgressing a biblical commandment) we cannot ordain a person who publicly violates the prohibition against gay sex. As an individual he/she can do whatever he or she wants and still be a cherished member of our congregations, as all Shabbat transgressors (and let's be honest, we have many of those) are welcomed.

Many proposals have been written about how to allow worthy gay students to become ordained. The main responsa on the matter was written by Rabbis Elliot Dorff, Daniel Nevins and Avram Reisner under the title of "Homosexuality, Human Dignity and Halakhah". These rabbis limit the biblical prohibition of Leviticus to anal sex, classifying all other kinds of sexual contact between persons of the same sex as rabbinical enactments. These decisions of the Sages can be annulled by the principle of "*kevod habryot*", "The dignity of human beings", if the situation causes pain and

"all Masorti seminaries, except for the one in Argentina, now accept openly gay students; some of them have been ordained and are working in pulpit and educational positions worldwide."

suffering to people. Therefore, these rabbis established that a gay Jew can be a good example for his community, as his or her sexual orientation is not in violation of any commandment per se, as there is only one specific problematic sexual behaviour. On this basis, all Masorti seminaries, except for the one in Argentina, now accept openly gay students; some of them have been ordained and are working in pulpit and educational positions worldwide.

On the subject of gay marriage and/or commitment ceremonies we have many opinions, however most rabbis accept today that some kind of ceremony should be offered to gay couples. This ranges from ceremonies that lack the main traditional symbols of a Jewish wedding (*huppah*, rings, wine, *ketubbah*) in order to make clear it is a different ceremony; to rabbis that conduct the same ceremony that is done for straight couples with slight changes. A middle ground, which we in the UK have accepted as a model, is the *shutafut* ceremony, a *halachic* model based in the Jewish partnership laws, but that enables us to maintain some traditional elements as the huppah, rings, wine and a contract. This particular ceremony could even apply to a straight couple wishing to choose this over the traditional *kiddushin* ceremony.

Rabbi Mijael Evan David *is Rabbi at Edgware Masorti Synagogue, he has previously served as Rabbi for Noam as well as holding positions in Omer, Ashkelon and Karmiel in Israel.*

Orthodox Judaism

The United Synagogue's website states that it aims to deliver 'authentic, inclusive and modern Torah Judaism', a mission I wholeheartedly endorse and one we strive to implement in our communities.

While there are many examples of good practice in centrist orthodox Jewish communities, some still appear to subscribe to the view that "authentic" and "inclusive" conflict, especially when relating to members or visitors who identify with the LGBT community. This can manifest itself in palpable discomfort, use of inappropriate language, or worse – outright hostility from established congregants and even religious leaders.

Our ability to create inclusive physical and conceptual spaces where *all* members of the Jewish community will feel at home is predicated on accepting that there need be no discord between authentic orthodox Judaism and inclusivism. An important aspect of this is that LGBT people will find our organisations welcoming and

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