

LJ/RJ Merger Talk – Notes

The 'vision' from Charley and Josh's perspective

- Charley and Josh said they want to bring the resources of RJ and LJ together for Jewish life to flourish and to influence values in the wider world – it's more effective if we do this together
- They envisage a vision of Prog Judaism that adds value and meaning to our lives
- The ambition is that we, as Progressive Jews, need to and can be more effective – the leadership of both organisations believe we will be more effective if we work together and therefore more effective in the wider world
- Having a united Progressive Judaism will give us a "seat at the table" in the wider world and enable us to be a more effective 'political' and influencing body
- We want our progressive values to be *the* voice of British Jews (not the Orthodox, as is current status quo)
- Imogen's comment: the 'vision' of a united Progressive Judaism seemed heavily focussed on external wider influence

"Why now?" from Charley and Josh's perspective

- There was an attempt at a merger about 40 years ago which failed. Previously, there were real differences in vision and practice; for example, different views over the status of patrilineal Jews
- Now, clergy teams across LJ and RJ are trained at the same college (Leo Beck) and there are no substantial differences between the movements in either ideology or practice
- Any differences are only between shuls, not movements
- For now, we do not want to change siddurim, minhag or liturgy

Questions from Kehillah Members

What if we get the watered-down, worst elements / version of both movements?

- This is a challenge whether we merge or not. This is a challenge for our communities and clergy – our task is to be the ambitious voice bringing the best of both together. We can't promise but we are very optimistic. This will not have any impact on individual shuls' identities.

What is the detail of any differences between RJ and LJ?

- There are no substantial differences. Marriage and status issues are all the same.
- Only a few very minor procedural issues e.g. RJ require seeing a Get for divorce.
- Youth movements will remain separate for now albeit with shared administration.

What is the vision for Progressive Judaism's place on politics?

- The point of merging is to be stronger when interacting with the current 'status quo' representative bodies such as the Board of Deputies. Many secular organisations still don't know what Progressive Judaism is and so defer to Orthodoxy by default.

What will support look like for communities if the merger happens because Progressive Judaism becomes much larger?

- We don't know exactly yet, but we will commit to this as we are passionate about our communities. We were both community Rabbis, we understand what's needed.
- No LJ shul will be paying more.

Can you explain details of how the merger will work?

- We will create a new organisation, Progressive Judaism, but need consent from the membership to do this.
- The proposal will go to the Boards of LJ and RJ and then come to communities in early 2025.
- We will need 75% vote of the membership to approve the decision. Some shuls may have to hold an EGM to approve this. Shuls will receive advice for how this will work with their constitutions.
- Individual communities will have a vote (depending on what their constitution says).
- Assuming that the 75% threshold is reached, Reform and Liberal Judaism will eventually be disbanded as individual organisations (as they will have been merged into one Progressive Judaism).
- If a shul votes no, but the overall 75% threshold is reached, the shul would have to become independent because Liberal Judaism will be disbanded.