

Publication: Jewish News
Date: 16.05.19

Chief: We must get creative to entice millennials to shul

Orthodoxy has to adapt to how millennials interact with their Judaism to bring them back into the fold, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis warned senior European rabbis this week.

However, Mirvis stressed that did not mean changing or reforming Orthodoxy, but looking at how to bring them back.

Mirvis was addressing the 31st Convention of the Conference of European Rabbis in Antwerp, Belgium, where the main theme was "Torah and Tradition in the Face of Contemporary Challenges".

"With regard to synagogue services," the Chief Rabbi said, "there is a greater desire among millennials to participate in energetic and inspiring services as opposed to attending a performance given by the chazan or cantor in shul."

Millennials, Mirvis said, are more autonomous. "We are seeing, for example, a weakening of loyalty to 'the establishment' and those regarded as being in positions of authority. We are seeing the thinning out of the middle ground," he added. "Fewer people are coming to shul unless they are observant and we should be concerned about that."

Mirvis said there was a need to instil a feeling of community for people who



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis (far left) on the panel in Atwerp this week

no longer looked at the old ways with fondness. "We need strong communities," Mirvis said, "A place where if you're not there on Shabbat, people will notice. A place where you are appreciated and valued, where young people can find meaning and joy."

He noted that nowadays, with what he termed the "*shtiebelisation*" of the community – "where younger people prefer a smaller *minyan* so that they can benefit

from a more close-knit atmosphere."

• Speaking to the Israeli network *Arutz Sheva* in Antwerp, Mirvis discussed rising antisemitism and the rate of aliyah from Britain to Israel. "We've noticed in the last three years, aliyah to Israel has dropped slightly so there is no expression in reality of any deep concerns," he said. "I hope that it won't be put to the test in the event of a Labour government."

