



Conference of
European Rabbis

LORD JAKOBOVITS PRIZE



Lord-Jakobovits- Prize



Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, Baron Jakobovits (8 February 1921 – 31 October 1999) was the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1967 to 1991. Prior to this, he had served as Chief Rabbi of Ireland and as Rabbi of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York City. In addition to his official duties, he was regarded as an authority in medical ethics from a Jewish standpoint. Rabbi Jakobovits was knighted in 1981 by former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, followed by a life peerage, and became the first Chief Rabbi to enter the House of Lords in 1988 as Baron Jakobovits.

Chief Rabbi Jakobovits also served as the President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), in which capacity he worked on standardising and regulating conversion to Judaism. Through his service as Chief Rabbi of Britain for over 24 years, as well as his prolific writings, speeches and personal impact, Rabbi Jakobovits' influence reached far outside of his congregations and well beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. He gained international recognition and was regarded in high esteem across the Jewish world and beyond; "A Sage in the Tradition of the Prophets" (The London Times), "A Rabbi's Rabbi" (the New York Times), "A Piercing Voice" (the Jerusalem Post) and "A Great Spokesman for Judaism" (the Jewish Chronicle).



The Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry was established in 2011 by Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the President of the CER, to be awarded to personalities who have shown support for European Jewry, defended their religious rights and combatted anti-Semitism. The prize is usually awarded in a festive ceremony at the Great Synagogue of Europe in Brussels in the presence of the leadership of the European Union and the Jewish leadership of Europe.

Lord Jakobovits dedicated his life to the pursuit of a philosophy which advocated religious commitment with unyielding love and consideration for his fellow man. The ability to bring communities together and appreciate the value of faith in a modernising world is one that he treasured throughout his life, and it is that character trait, above all others, which this award recognises.

The Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize was designed by Georgy V. Frangulyan, a world-renowned artist, and depicts an open Sefer Torah lying on top of three closed Torah scrolls. Georgy V. Frangulyan is an internationally acclaimed and esteemed artist whose most notable works include the monument on Boris Yeltsin's grave at the Novodevichy cemetery in Moscow, the monument to Okudshava on Arbat Street in Moscow and the statue of Empress Elizabeth in Baltiysk.



Brussels 2012

JERZY BUZEK honoured by the Conference of European Rabbis

Former Prime Minister of Poland and former European Parliament President Prof. Jerzy Buzek was awarded the first “Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry” by the CER during a ceremony held at Brussels’s Great Synagogue.

“Prof. Buzek has been a friend of Jewish communities for years, as a Polish Prime Minister and European Parliament’s President. He has been constantly building bridges of understanding, decisively fought against anti-Semitism, and acted for commemorating victims of the Shoah”—Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, CER President.

At the Great Synagogue of Europe in Brussels, European Jews gathered for the Prize Award and remembrance of Toulouse victims on March 27, 2012.

The ceremony at the Brussels synagogue, which was consecrated by former European Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, at the Great Synagogue of Europe in 2008 included a special prayer for the victims of the Toulouse shootings. During the ceremony, children from local Jewish schools read out a psalm in memory of the Toulouse victims. To emphasise the message of education for tolerance and mutual respect, classes from the European School in Brussels attended the ceremony as well.

CER President Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt remarked, “This public affirmation of our continued commitment to the values of tolerance and democracy which form the basis of the European Union needs to be reasserted particularly at this time when we are mourning the passing of our children as the result of a hate crime on the European continent”. Goldschmidt added,

“Coming just one week before Pesach, the ultimate Jewish festival of liberation and freedom, when we transfer the message to our children of the continued victory of the forces of light over those of darkness, it is particularly poignant that we gather here to reassert our commitment to those values”.

The CER awarded the first “Prix Judaïsme Européen – Prix Lord Jakobovits” to Prof. Jerzy Buzek MEP for his efforts in support of Polish and European Jewry. The award ceremony was addressed by the president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz MEP.

Several European and Belgian political leaders, diplomats, as well as Chief Rabbis and other representatives of European Jewish communities were present, including the Chief Rabbi of Toulouse, Avraham Weill.



Brussels 2013

Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize to German Chancellor

ANGELA MERKEL

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was honoured by the CER for her dedicated support to the German Jewish community and her denunciation of anti-Semitism throughout Europe. At a ceremony in Brussels following an EU summit, Merkel was awarded the Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry at the Great Synagogue of Europe.

“Chancellor Merkel is a worthy recipient in recognition of her continuing efforts of inter-communal harmony across Europe, her friendship towards the Jewish community and her outstanding contributions to the promotion of tolerance and understanding”, commented Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt.

Merkel referred in her acceptance speech to the murder of the six million Jews instigated by Germany, labelling the Holocaust a “break with civilization”. She stressed the right to religious freedom, referring to anti-Semitic comments that had arisen during a fierce recent debate in Germany over the Jewish and Muslim practices of circumcision.

“The fight against anti-Semitism is a paramount duty of a free democratic state,” Merkel declared, adding that it was important to invest in education to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

The Chancellor also spoke about Germany's friendship with Israel and stated that a two-state solution remains an attainable goal in the Middle East, despite all setbacks.

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt praised Merkel for her “principled leadership” and her stance during the debate on circumcision. He mentioned it had not been an easy decision to award the prize to a German chancellor but said it was the “right decision”.



Paris 2015

MANUEL VALLS, former Prime Minister of France receiving the Lord Jakobovits Prize

Former Prime Minister of France Manuel Valls was honoured by a gathering of European rabbis for his “exemplary determination in the fight against anti-Semitism”, less than a month after he announced the beginning of a significant national effort to combat his country’s rising levels of anti-Jewish incidents.

Following a meeting of the CER standing committee, a private ceremony was attended by CER President Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the Standing Committee and Members of the Board of Patrons. The presentation itself was given by the Chairman of the Board of Patrons Mr Boris Mints alongside Vice Chair Mrs Joelle Aflalo.

During the ceremony, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt stated: “We decided to award Prime Minister Valls the Lord Jakobovits prize after the decisive action Prime Minister Valls took to protect the French Jewry from the mobs who were about to make a pogrom against our people and our synagogues”.

He continued, “Some voices are asking if there is a future for the Jewish people in Europe. My response to this question can only be answered by European governments themselves. If the answer is in the affirmative, then they must follow the example of Prime Minister Valls”.



Madrid 2016

FELIPE VI, King of Spain awarded Lord Jakobovits Prize

King Felipe VI was recognised for his steadfast support for the Jewish community in Spain. His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain received the Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry from Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt at the El Pardo Palace in Madrid.

During the ceremony, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt urged religious leaders to take responsibility for their communities amid growing extremism in Europe.

The king received the award in tribute to his steadfast support of the Jewish community in Spain and in honour of his welcome and endorsement of the unique legislation to allow Jews who can prove their Spanish heritage to return to Spain. The unprecedented move was the climax of years of dialogue between the palace and the Jewish community. In particular, the CER recognised the “immense contribution that the King has made in his willingness to embrace the many religious faiths present throughout the continent”.

His Majesty King Felipe VI remarked, “Europe needs the invaluable contribution of its Jewish communities because we need to be honest and respectful to both our common Judeo-Christian values and origins and also with the broader or universal sense of true human values, we are trying to extend and defend worldwide all the horrors and hatred that still persist in so many places on Earth”.

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt emphasised, “As religious leaders, we must take every opportunity to stress how it is our responsibility to combat all forms of extremism. We set the tone for our communities and can help leaders worldwide combat this evil. However, in an era where anti-Semitism is on the rise throughout Europe, Spain has taken extraordinary measures to make its Jews

feel welcome. Not only did the Minister of Justice acknowledge the expulsion of what he has called a 'historic mistake', but he also ensured that action was taken to rectify it."

Isaac Querub, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain said, "It is an honour and privilege, and a wise decision as well, that the CER has awarded this prize to His Majesty the King, and it is our pleasure to welcome the CER to Spain. Our community is blessed to have the warmest of relationships with King Felipe VI and this award is a credit for his involvement with the Spanish Jews and the Sephardim around the world. From the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, we are truly convinced that His Majesty may be a key figure in leading dialogue and cooperation between Jews, Israel and the Arab World".



Brussels 2018

Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry awarded to

FRANS TIMMERMANS,
EC Vice President

ANTONIO TAJANI,
EP President

The First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, was awarded the Rabbi Lord Jakobovits Prize for his unwavering support of European Jewry.

Speaking at the Great Synagogue in Brussels, First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans stated: “I will always be there for you, I will always defend your rights and I will always stand by you”.

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the award to Timmermans, while Rabbi Albert Guigui, Chief Rabbi of Brussels, presented a second award to Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament. In a heartfelt address, delivered spontaneously, Timmermans remarked: “The souls of so many cities were torn out during the Shoah but the attitude of the Jewish community is the ultimate triumph over Hitler and his henchmen. This is our common quest. This is the Europe we want to be a part of”.

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt thanked Timmermans and Tajani for their support for religious freedom in Europe but warned against “the sinister undercurrent of hate in society that many of us had hoped was consigned to the past”.

Lord-Jakobovits- Preis



Munich 2023

Awarding of the CER Lord Jakobovits Prize to Bavaria's Minister-President

DR MARKUS SÖDER



Bavaria has long been home to thousands of Jews who have re-established a vibrant, thriving, and prosperous community life after the Holocaust, where they can practise Judaism safely.

The openness and warmth of Bavaria welcome Jews from all over the world, and many enjoy living and working in the Free State.

Such a trend would not be possible without the unwavering efforts of the Free State of Bavaria and the personal steadfast support and commitment of Bavarian Minister-President, Dr Markus Söder, MdL, ensuring that European Jewish communities have a future and can thrive in an open and tolerant European society.

In this context, the highlights in recent years have been the comprehensive political and institutional measures to promote Jewish life in Bavaria, the Ba-

varian State Government's expressed and actively practised promise of freedom and protection for Jewish citizens, the resolute fight against anti-Semitism and above all, the goal of further developing Munich into a more important focal point of Jewish life.

It is critical for European Jewry to be cognizant of the steadfast support and partnership of the Bavarian State Government, working in tandem with the CER, to preserve and promote Jewish life, fight against anti-Semitism, and ensure the protection of religious freedom and practice.

Bavaria's commitment to Judaism is a shining example for the rest of the world and is worthy of special recognition.

In light of this, the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) awards Bavaria's Minister-President, Dr Markus Söder, MdL, the Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry. This award is the CER's highest distinction, presented in gratitude and acknowledgement of Dr Söder and the Bavarian State Government's commitment to the preservation and advancement of Jewish life in Europe.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Conference of European Rabbis is the primary rabbinical alliance in Europe. It unites more than 700 community rabbis and leaders of the European mainstream synagogue communities. It was founded in 1956 at the initiative of British Chief Rabbi Sir Israel Brodie, to revive the vanquished Jewish communities on the European mainland. Chief Rabbi Brodie was supported by the Chief Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam, Aharon Schuster and the British Sephardic spiritual leader, Hacham Solomon Gaon.

The first conference took place in 1957 in Amsterdam. As a result of the CER union with the rabbinates of the stronger western European orthodox communities, the vast majority of mainstream communities throughout the continent retained Orthodox affiliation and rabbinical leadership, except for Hungary and Sweden where non-Orthodox groups had a strong prior presence.

Even as some major Western European communities were deliberating about joining non-Orthodox movements in the post-WWII period, the strong rabbinical alliance was successful in ensuring an Orthodox rabbinate and securing the continuity of the Orthodox rite even where large parts had unfortunately become secularized.

The organisation is run by a Standing Committee of 35 members which convenes twice a year for working meetings and policy assessments in one of the European capitals. These conventions are combined with a visit to the local Jewish community and institutions, and meetings with the government and other bodies for strengthening ties and cooperation on matters of local and pan-European Jewish significance. The Standing Committee members are generally the chief rabbis of European countries and major cities and senior rabbinical judges. The entire CER membership assembles once every two years for a general convention to which all European chief rabbis and congregational rabbis are invited.

The CER is mandated to defend the religious rights of European Jewry and has become the voice of Judaism for the European continent. The CER has recently been involved with defending the rights of Jews to slaughter animals for consumption according to Jewish law and the right to circumcise their children. The CER also functions as a rabbinical authority, with expert committees to certify conversions and kashruth (kosher) operations and to pass rabbinical legal decisions affecting the broader Jewish community.

The CER has always been the expert address for European Jewish communities and rabbis for support in the facilitation of their religious functions, recruitment of rabbis and educators and other matters. The CER has a special department for the planning, engineering and building of mikvehs (ritual baths) which has fulfilled over a dozen such projects all over Europe. The current president of the CER is Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who served as chairman of the Standing Committee for over a decade. The chairman of the Presidium is associate President Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. Before Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, the organisation was headed by Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. The Executive Director of the CER since its inception was Rabbi Maurice (Moshe) Rose, who was succeeded in the year 2001 by Rabbi Aba Dunner who passed away in 2011.

WE BELIEVE

We believe in the eternal validity of the Divine Law as revealed in our sacred scriptures and as authentically interpreted in all ages by the Rabbis, acknowledging the authority of the Written and Oral Law of Judaism, and that Halacha forms the basis of Jewish life; That the restoration of the Jewish State in the Holy Land is a manifestation of Divine mercy towards the Jewish people and Israel's well-being is coupled with its moral and religious strength; That the religious attachment is the sole enduring link between the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora and that Israel is destined to become the source of religious inspiration to the Jewish people and the world at large; That all relations and dealings between nations must be governed by ethical and religious principles, without which human happiness cannot be secured; That advances in science and technology may become a menace to mankind unless they are used with regard to ethical and religious principles.

As spiritual leaders of our people, we call on the lay leaders of the European Jewish communities and communal organisations, to work hand in hand with us to challenge the growing secularisation of our communities, the growing threat of anti-Semitism in many European cities and empower the rabbis of our communities for them to be able to serve their communities with excellence.

We also solemnly call on every Jew to strive to conduct their life as a living expression of the Divine Will, by studying the holy words of our Torah, and by observing its laws, which have eternally been the sole guarantee of Jewish continuity, notably Shabbat and Festivals and Jewish education of adults and youth alike.

As the custodians and teachers of Jewish Law in Europe, we maintain that marriage, divorce and conversions will only be recognised and valid in Jewish Law when they have been carried out in conformity with Halacha (Jewish Law). To prevent irreparable personal tragedies and to preserve the unity of the Jewish people, we earnestly appeal to the Jewish public not to be parties to marriages, divorces or conversions which would be contrary to Jewish Law.



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