

JABE Seminar: Ethical Challenge for Jewish Charities

Speakers

The Chief Rabbi
Lord Young of Graffham
Dayan Isaac Berger
Simon Bentley
Clive Freedman QC

Chaired by Clive Freedman QC and hosted by BDO Stoy Hayward, the event was attended by over 70 Chairmen, Chief Executives and Trustees representing Jewish charities and organisations from across the community. It provided a platform for to openly and frankly discuss topical ethical issues and moral dilemmas that they face, particularly relevant in light of the current economic climate.

Lorraine Spector, Executive Director of JABE, commented: "We all care deeply about our charities and are bound

Sharing his own experiences of hiring and firing as well as drawing on issues in the public domain, the Chief Rabbi advised the audience:

"We must act so as to be agents of trust - thank you to you all for living it and thank you to JABE for getting us to remember."



Lord Young opened by assuring the audience that 20 years since standing down from the Cabinet was sufficiently long enough to allow him to talk about ethics, highlighting how charities had



L - R: Lord Young of Graffham; Clive Freedman QC; Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks; Simon Bentley and Daniel Dover

together within the Jewish community. We know that the issues experienced by one Jewish charity can affect us all, therefore it is vital that together we consider the ethical issues that face us."

The Chief Rabbi discussed the importance of tzedakah - despite an ever changing financial market - but also the need for 'guidance and direction' in our charitable endeavours.

He commented: "In our jobs, everyday is an opportunity for a seminar about ethics. We should be ambassadors not just for Judaism but for Jewish values. Financial transparency is critical in a general context and fundamental to Judaism."

evolved in that time. Lord Young raised issues such as: charity-amalgamation and the subsequent savings in administrative overheads; the importance of running a charity efficiently; and the justifiably increasing demands from benefactors, commenting, 'deal with your clients charitably but run your administration in a business-like manner.'

Lord Young's frankness about questionable donations and donors' mixed motives struck a chord with the audience, as he commented: "Are there some people to whom we should say 'thanks, but no thanks?'" Yoni Sherizen, Chief Executive of the



Dayan Berger addresses the delegates

University Jewish Chaplaincy, responded by raising another ethical issues, how far a donor's income should be investigated by a charity.

The issue of striking the appropriate balance between running a charity as a business operation and as a non-commercial enterprise evoked some mixed responses from the highly-charged audience.

The charismatic Dayan Berger stressed that a charity must be true to its charter, "a charity is in the business of helping people but if it is set up to promote education, it must do that; if it is set up to give alms to the poor, it must do that." he continued, 'it is unethical to confuse the two'.

Ellen Goldberg of the New Israel Fund evoked a mixed response from the audience when she raised the controversial issue of holiday allowance and Jewish festivals, which in some cases adds up to more than 40 days of paid annual leave.

JABE trustee Richard Loftus, raised the pressing issue of what is and what is not acceptable in terms of 'pulling at heart strings', especially when the marketing material may not fully reflect the charity's services, with Dayan Berger commenting: "We must not allow our marketing activity to portray anything other than a charity's true principles."

Dayan Berger concluded: "There is no substitute for clear thinking and consideration or being dependable, prudent and responsible."