

## **A Community of Communities**

### *Thought for the Day*

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Last Thursday, I had the pleasure and privilege to participate in an extraordinary event in Buckingham Palace, when the Prince of Wales invited a representative cross-section of the Jewish Community – including about ten of us from Scotland – to a reception. I can't say with certainty that it was unique, but there can't have been many occasions when the Royal Family has reached out to a minority community by inviting them into their home.

Prince Charles spoke about his vision of this country as “a community of communities”, about his appreciation that synagogues pray for the welfare of his family, and about his pride that his grandmother, Princess Alice, had helped rescue Jewish refugees from the Nazis and been recognised by the Holocaust Memorial Authority as one of the “righteous amongst the nations”. She wanted to be buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and when her family asked how they'd be able to visit her grave – as Prince William did last year – she replied that they shouldn't worry as there's a regular bus service!

What stood out most for me about this event was the genuine warmth towards an entire community, not just to a few leaders or prominent members. For me it pointed the way to a society in which we are all accepted, not despite who we are, but for who we are, where we can be ourselves and still play a full role.

A community of communities is an apt way of describing a nation where people do not have to choose between their own identity and being part of society, where on the contrary, identifying with one's own community is simply a natural way of being part of the community at large.

It is, as we often say, like being one thread in a tartan – it's the differences and intersections that make the pattern. And like cloth, it's the warp and the weft, the ins and outs of the weave, that hold society together; without it we would fall apart.