

FROM THE PUBLISHER AND EDITOR

Like many others, we have written much about the power of speech. I suppose the more we speak, the more we need to learn how to do it properly. The art of correct speech is part of the larger job we have of refining ourselves. The slavery in Egypt was to refine us; the iron furnace of Mitzraim made us purer. The Pesach seder involves more opportunities to speak than at most, if not all other times.

Speech is a major part of Pesach. The word Pesach itself means “the mouth speaks”. The matzah is called Lechem Oni and the Gemara tells us that this is because it is lechem she’onim alav devarim harbeh (bread over which we answer many things). We ask questions, spend time discussing the Exodus and Hashem’s wonders, we recite Hallel, and we use our mouths to sing the many songs of the Festival.

Our goal is to use our mouths to bring back the closeness to Hashem that Adam had in the beginning before the snake’s evil speech caused the sin. Our positive speech at the seder and at all other times can overturn the snake’s destructive legacy. Man is after all a “living soul”, which the Targum Unkelus explains to be one with the ability to speak. At the Exodus we were made a nation and we were born anew, reaching the level of Adam before the sin - to be G-d’s chosen people and fulfill the goal of creation. It’s obviously a mighty responsibility - but our job is to use our power of speech positively to elevate ourselves. It’s at Pesach that we have the ultimate opportunity.

I hope you enjoy this special edition. Huge thanks go to the whole team under the editorship of Robert who has created a wonderfully rich and varied issue. Massive thanks to our many advertisers. We are very grateful to each one of you. The oldest and the ones appearing here for the first time – it is a privilege to be associated with you all.

Wishing all our readers a chag kasher v’sameach.

MARTYN SAMUELS, PUBLISHER



Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our teacher) was specially chosen to undertake a mission from G-d. At first glance, we might think that when a person finds himself in such a situation, rules don’t apply – something akin to having diplomatic immunity (or how people on “missions from G-d” are always shown to behave in the movies). Certainly, a person entrusted with such a special mission could be spared from wasting his time on trivial things like social niceties, regards for the feelings of others, and even good manners (aka derech eretz), no? And, yet, if we look carefully at the events that unfolded, we find just the opposite.

Despite the fact that millions of lives were at stake, Moshe tried to turn down the job because of his concern for the feelings of his older brother Aharon, who, for decades until that momentous day at the burning bush, had been the Navi (the Prophet) for the Jewish people. Moshe wondered how he could usurp his older brother’s position, no doubt causing Aharon pain and hurt feelings as a result. What makes great people truly great is their constant concern for other people, despite having many important and pressing matters before them and being under constant stress and strain.

What we see is that these seemingly “trivial things” do matter, and even more so for someone in such a position. Being on a mission from G-d – and, truth be told, each and every one of us is on our own unique mission from G-d – makes us more accountable to each other, not less. How we do things matters – especially when it comes to mitzvos. Carrying out the orders of the King does not authorise us to do damage or cause injury to anyone, and this includes damaging our own character in the process of discharging our obligations. Even in a situation such as the one Moshe found himself in, having been explicitly commanded by Hashem to do something, the only way to fulfil the mitzvah properly was by rising to the occasion and avoiding causing any sort of defects to his character. The movies may show otherwise, but real missions from G-d require no less.

On behalf of everyone at JL, we wish everyone a chag kasher v’sameach – a happy and kosher Pesach.

**ROBERT SUSSMAN,
EDITOR**

ON THE COVER: TO BE JEWISH IS TO CONSTANTLY QUESTION. PERHAPS THE MOST WELL-KNOWN JEWISH QUESTION OF ALL IS THE ONE ASKED AT THE PESACH SEDER, WHICH MANY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO HAVE THE YOUNGEST CHILD ASK: MAH NISHTANA HALAYLAH HAZEH MIKOL HALEILO? “WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS?” PICTURED ON THE COVER IS A HAGGADAH OPENED UP TO THE PAGE OF MAH NISHTANA WITH A FINGER POINTING AND FOLLOWING ALONG.

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