

SPEAK UP!

THE CLEAN
SPEECH
PROJECT UK
COMMUNITY
MAGAZINE



STARTING 11TH FEBRUARY



CLEAN SPEECH UK 2023



LAST YEAR **75**
COMMUNITIES &
SCHOOLS RAN
CLEAN SPEECH
EVENTS



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PEOPLE SIGNED
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VIDEOS



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SAID IT
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INTRODUCTION TO THE **CLEAN** **SPEECH** **MAGAZINE**



I often wonder what the reaction would be were a person from three-hundred years ago to time-travel and end up in one of our homes or offices. What would their reaction be upon walking through our homes, streets and cities? They'd marvel at our 'new-style' clothing, they'd have to be careful not to be hit by a passing car, they'd gasp at our fridge, freezer and oven. But I also wonder what the reaction would be if our fictitious visitor from three-hundred years ago was visited by someone three-hundred years their prior. What would the 1400s person marvel at in the 1700s? Bicycles? Glasses? There are some commodities that feed off existing needs and others that almost create their own needs. Speech and communication is a social need – *it's not good for mankind to be alone*, as the Torah tells us. And Pirkei Avos tells us to *acquire for yourself a friend* – for company, to advise, to give us more of an objective look at life.

But our methods of communication have changed to such a great degree. If a person were to have been blasted back to medieval times brandishing a mobile phone they may have been tried as a witch! **And in many senses the rapidity of communication frequency has created its own norms and social constructs.** Gone are the days when 'the boss is on their way to a different city, they are not contactable.' Nowadays, if one hasn't received a reply within a short space of time then 'something is wrong,' often necessitating an 'out-of-office' reply reassuring the sender that the recipient is breathing fine, they are simply in a meeting.

And with rapid communication comes rapid challenges and often searching questions. Are we utilising our communication to further our relationship-building or is some of our communication undermining relationships? Are we on top of our communication or are we exposing ourselves and others to negative communication which is dictating our norms?

The Clean Speech Project UK is a joint project between Seed and GIFT sponsored by Wohl Legacy; it is an offshoot of a hugely successful project founded in Colorado. The Clean Speech Project UK is in its third year – last year 75 schools and shuls ran events, sessions and programmes, with over 1500 people signed up to receive the daily videos. The goal is to strengthen and upgrade the way we speak - to focus on the power of a positive word and the danger of a negative one.

This magazine is aimed at showcasing a variety of communicative experiences – you will hear about how speech impacts the courtroom, the classroom, campus, how to deal with a range of children and much Torah wisdom from a variety of superb educators. The order is not indicative of any superiority or preference – we simply slotted in articles to create a sense of variety in content and style. Every article is worth the read and will enrich your communicative journey! A huge thank you to the Clean Speech team at Seed and GIFT, to all the contributors and to Netanel Rosen for his wonderful editing.

May we all enjoy positive communication and connections,

Happy reading and get involved in the project – sign up to receive your 30-day videos and enjoy our resources!

**Rabbis Fine & Zeidman
Seed & GIFT**

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CREATING THE WORLD THROUGH SPEECH

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis



Did you know that Hashem used speech to create our world?

The Mishna in Masechet Avot, Chapter 5, tells us

The world was created with ten utterances

This teaching is derived from Parashat Bereishit, in which on nine different occasions the Torah says, “And Hashem said let there be ...” In addition, according to our Sages, the opening verse of Bereishit is also a statement.

Surely, Hashem could have created the world with one utterance. Why ten? The Mishna answers: In order to increase the reward for the righteous who sustain the world created with ten utterances and to increase punishment for the wicked who destroy the world created in this way.

What I find intriguing is that the Mishna points out that Hashem could have created the world with one utterance such as, “Let there be a world.” But the Mishna could have asked a better question: Surely Hashem didn’t need any utterance at all? Hashem is all powerful! He could just think, “Let there be a world,” and the world would come about!

It is clear that Hashem wanted to show us the power of speech.

This realisation prompted King Solomon in Mishlei (Proverbs) to declare, “Life and death are in the hands of the tongue.”

The great commentator Ibn Ezra divides up all the commandments of the Torah into three categories:

1. **Mitzvot aseï** – the practical commandments which require action.
2. **Mitzvot halev** – commandments of the heart which require contemplation, thought, belief and feelings.
3. **Mitzvot hapeh** – the oral commandments. Numerous mitzvot which are performed by saying something or desisting from saying something.

In addition, many of the mitzvot aseï, the practical commandments, are introduced by us saying a beracha (blessing), highlighting for us how crucially important what we say is.

Through the laws of kashrut, we correctly highlight the importance of what goes into our mouths. Through clean speech, we should be equally concerned about what comes out of them.

Let us therefore strive to always be amongst the righteous who sustain the world through what they say.

Speech can create a world and speech can destroy a world.

SPEAK TO ME

Rabbi Raphael Leban,

*founder of the international
Clean Speech Project*

*Rabbi Leban is the Managing Director of The Jewish Experience,
Denver Colorado. Originally from Virginia and an extreme skier,
Rabbi Leban studied in the Mir Yeshiva and does fantastic work in
Denver, including founding the Clean Speech Project*





You know the old joke about the Jewish guy who was stranded by himself on a deserted island? By the time he was rescued he had built himself a whole city. He had a house, an office, a gym, and two synagogues. ‘Why do you need two synagogues?’ they asked him. He answered with passion, ‘This one I belong to. And that one — I wouldn’t step foot in it!’

Thank God we’re not stranded by ourselves on a deserted island. We are part of a wonderful community—even though sometimes we have a hard time getting along.

And that’s what Clean Speech is all about, keeping our beautiful community together through the art of Jewish mindful speech.

Clean Speech was developed in Colorado in 2018 as a community-wide education and awareness campaign

to unite us in the practice of Jewish mindful speech, to build a more positive, respectful, and peaceful world.

After quite an unimagined amount of effort and expense, gathering a wide spectrum of participating Jewish organizations of all stripes and affiliations, and drafting a curriculum of timeless, relevant lessons, this initiative was born. And it was worthwhile.

The community was united by a shared desire to ‘talk about how we talk’ as one communal professional put it—and be proud of it. The phrase ‘clean speech’ took hold in homes, offices and coffee shops. With the remarkable engagement and impact of that first campaign, it was clear that much more could be done.

What resulted was a series of campaigns, each addressing a particular facet of successful speech, whether in avoiding the painful pitfalls or achieving the amazing possibilities. The concepts are as old as the Torah itself, from which the life-enhancing wisdom comes, but the style and spin are fresh and new.

And other communities joined in across North America—New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Ottawa—

and across the Atlantic too, more than a dozen communities so far, and growing.

Why?

There are many things that make life pleasurable: a clear sense of purpose, opportunities to contribute, the potential to create value, just to name a few. Based on personal experience, it is certain that successful relationships with others must be somewhere near the top of the list.

We glow when we feel admired and loved by others. We pine for closeness and intimate moments. We crumble when we feel abandoned or shamed. The health of our closest and most important relationships is a pretty good indicator of our state of mental health, emotional health and also our spiritual health.

In fact, the Mishnah teaches that if someone has earned the regard of others, he has likewise earned the

regard of the Almighty (Avos 3:10). It seems that our successful relationships 'give pleasure' to Hashem too. And unfortunately, the opposite is taught as well, if we've lost the regard of others, we've thereby lost favor in God's eyes, perish the thought.

Given that spoken communication is the most important lubricant for the smooth operation of human relationships, we simply have no choice but to invest heavily in it. And it's far from obvious. It takes real effort to get it right. We have to learn the numerous factors which affect good communication, and then we must remain vigilant to put them into practice on a consistent basis. Education and awareness—the dual pillars of positive change, and the underlying elements of Clean Speech campaigns.

It is our sincere hope and prayer that all our efforts blossom into beautiful words, phrases and conversations, uniting us in the art of Jewish mindful speech.







Q & A

**REGARDING HILCHOS
LASHON HARA WITH
RAV SHRAGA FEIVEL
ZIMMERMAN**



**Rov and Av Beis Din
of Kehillas Federation**

written by Rabbi Chaim Burman

Can teachers discuss a child in a staff meeting when only some staff will actually be able to help with the situation? Can they speak about a child's challenges in the staffroom when other staff members can hear?

Under certain circumstances, it is permitted to discuss an individual's shortcomings for their benefit. Teachers who discuss a student's challenges fit into that category if they do so in order to strategise towards improving the child's attainment or general school experience. However, this does not permit them to engage in "staff-room gossip" about student's misdemeanours, for which there is no benefit. Nor would it be acceptable to have such conversations in front of other staff members if there would be no benefit gained through them hearing this information. Aside from the prohibition of lashon hara, overhearing this information could unnecessarily prejudice the views of staff members towards that child.

Can I vent to my therapist or husband about a very difficult person at work and the challenges I face with my mother?

Being able to release one's anxiety, stress and frustrations by sharing personal challenges with another is permissible and advisable, as our Sages expounded: "When there is angst in one's heart – share it with another" (Yoma 75a). Notwithstanding this, if it is not necessary to do so, one should not name the individual (and ensure that the listener will not find out their identity). Even when it is necessary to name the individual, you should not exaggerate more than is necessary since this brings no additional benefit. Moreover, one must be wary that the person who is spoken about should come to no harm as a result of the conversation.

Can I speak badly about someone if I don't mention their name?

Although this is technically permitted, it should be avoided for a few reasons. First, if the listener is able (or will be able in the future) to decipher who you are talking about, then it would not be permitted. Moreover, even if they will never know who you refer to, it should still be avoided. The reason for this is that aside from the Torah prohibition of lashon hara, such speech also inculcates a person with negative character traits. We should be positive people who are able to identify and celebrate the good in others. When we speak badly, scornfully or sarcastically about others,

even when we don't mention their name, we are perpetuating a negative character trait.

Can an academic engage in peer-review where they are required to note the shortcomings and flaws in presentation of previous researchers in the field?

This will generally be permitted since the practice of academic discourse is based upon the development of a field of knowledge. Progression requires correction and revision of prior misconceptions and false premises. As such, one who enters academia does so with the understanding that their assertions will be challenged in the interests of progress and truth. That said, this is only permitted when critical review is undergone for a constructive purpose. However, it is not permitted to make ad hominem attacks or purposeless snide remarks, for example, about style. As a general rule, it is never a good idea to try to elevate yourself by putting others down.

How should I respond to someone who calls me as a reference for a job application or shidduch?

You may share the information that is relevant and helpful to the person if it is genuinely important to know these realities before employing or marrying someone but you should also try to assist your friend by painting them in a positive light where possible.

Is it permitted to discuss Jewish politicians and their policies at a Shabbos meal?

It's difficult to see how idle chatter about public figures is of any benefit other than satisfying curiosity and an urge to gossip. Clearly, the Torah does not condone speaking negatively of others for such purposes. There are so many fascinating and appropriate topics for a Shabbos table that will uplift and inspire one's family and children, why speak badly about anyone?

A Jewish tailor has ruined clothing of ours on two occasions. When I tell people about this they want to know who it was to avoid sending their clothes to them. May I say the name of the tailor for people to avoid using them for alteration?

You may do so, as you are potentially helping them avoid a loss but you should also preface that this has only been your experience and it may not happen to them.

CLEAN SPEECH IN THE WORKPLACE

– Sue Nyman



Sue Nyman is a Chartered Accountant working for one of the global major practices, Grant Thornton. Sue's background is in corporate finance; she is now a leader of the risk management team for the Advisory practice (anything that isn't audit and tax). One of the areas in which Sue specializes is independence and ethics, as well as sitting on a number of trust boards of organisations within the Jewish community.



For many of us, the time spent at work consumes a material part of our lives. Our working relationships are different to personal relationships: family, friends, our kids' teachers and others. The context in which we apply Clean Speech may be different at work but the same basic rules apply. Because of the impact of our workplace on the rest of our lives – few are able to compartmentalise our lives completely – it is critical that we are aware of how we speak to people at work and conduct our relationships there.

We all have bad days in the workplace. Sadly, however, we are all familiar with the colleague who is always complaining and does not have a good word to say about anything. In any situation, those negative words are draining. That lack of positivity is a real “mood hoover” leading to an unpleasant work environment and potentially lowers achievement for all. For the individual themselves, it means that they are less likely to be engaged in interesting work; less likely to receive promotion and the respect given to them is lower. And all this comes from words and how they are used. Contrast this to the person whose words are always positive, rising above any negativity; always seeing and communicating the good. Their words are empowering, creating an enriching work environment in which they and colleagues can flourish.

In everything one does one must act with integrity and an additional key aspect, which is of particular importance at work, is to apply confidentiality. Careless words could disseminate information that is confidential. This might be as big as tipping off about a major deal or sharing information about a colleague, positively or negatively. The latter situation is particularly bad as it would also be lashon hara, one of the core issues of the Clean Speech project. It is amazing how much information I have personally picked up when sitting on a train filled with working teams travelling between meetings and unavoidably tuning into their conversations. Especially in a work environment – formal or informal - think before you speak and who will hear you.

In everything one does one must act with integrity and an additional key aspect, which is of particular importance at work, is to apply confidentiality.

We communicate with colleagues in many different ways, but the power and clarity of our speech is fundamental. In a positive corporate culture, feedback is essential – both upwards and downwards – and that feedback must be done in such a way to enable and empower the person receiving it. Contrast two situations. Moishe (senior) is giving feedback to Joel (junior). Moishe sternly tells Joel that his work is inaccurate and unacceptable. It impacts on the rest of the team and the delivery of service. Joel leaves the meeting feeling demoralised. All he can think about is that he is a poor worker and does not know how to improve. That mood takes hold and he takes it home with him.

Contrast to Miriam, Rose's people manager. Miriam starts the feedback meeting telling Rose how well she is doing – giving examples of how clients and colleagues respond well to her and how good her factual analysis is. Rose then continues to say that she would be even better if she took more time over her work as sometimes errors creep in which need to be managed. Rose leaves the meeting feeling pleased with the feedback she received and has something positive to work on to make her even better.

These are some of the situations that arise at work where words and the way they are spoken can impact on individuals and the work environment as a whole. Role modelling good behaviours and speech can literally make the world of difference to the workplace and to the individuals within it.

COMMUNICATION IN THE COURTROOM



**Barrister Joseph Ollech,
Falcon Chambers**

As a barrister, written and spoken communication is key to everything I do, but nowhere is that more evident than when I am in court. Argument, persuasion, debate, and cross-examination of witnesses all take centre stage, and everyone involved wants to be heard, understood and believed.

What I find striking is how the most persuasive barristers, or the most credible witnesses, are always the ones who are calm, polite, and reasonable. Passion and emotion can run high in trial, but I have never seen anyone get anywhere, or improve their case, by being angry, rude, raising their voice, or swearing.

Being in court involves intense or heightened forms of things that we do every day. We speak, we ask questions, we discuss our thoughts and feelings,

probe opinions, or need to discuss and resolve problems that arise. Sometimes we have arguments about whether someone we know did something wrong, hurt someone or caused another person to lose money or damaged their property. In a trial, all of this (apart from discussing our feelings!) is in play, and in a format where the stakes are often high. In every case, a decision will be made and there will be a winner and a loser.

A barrister's job is to present his or her client's case effectively, clearly and honestly. In doing so, he will test the other side's evidence, asking witnesses tough and pointed questions in order to test the strength of the evidence and the quality of their memories. He or she will also present and explain the facts to the court and explain the legal reasons why the solution should be one thing or another.



We can't avoid asking the necessary and tough questions, but we can control how we ask them and the words we choose to use.

Often, witnesses can and do feel like they are under attack and become defensive. But no barrister gets brownie points by being a bully, or by haranguing the judge, and no witness gets any further by losing their temper. On the contrary, everyone operates better, and justice is far better served, by calm, clear, polite and rational questions, thoughtful answers calmly given, and legal arguments politely and clearly presented.

These principles are enshrined in the Code of Conduct, which control the professional standards that a barrister needs to abide by. For example, it directs that: *„you must not make statements or ask questions merely to insult, humiliate or annoy a witness or any other person.“* Witnesses can get annoyed or may feel insulted and sometimes that can't be helped – but a barrister must never be asking questions or saying things simply in order to trigger that feeling. We can't

avoid asking the necessary and tough questions, but we can control how we ask them and the words we choose to use.

If that is true in court, which does involve conflict, it should apply with even more force in our less confrontational and day to day interactions. Even where we do have tensions to resolve, being calm and polite will always be more effective than being aggressive and rude. Reflecting on how I communicate in the courtroom has been a good *musar* moment for me – if I pay half as much attention to the way I speak outside court as I do to the way that I speak when I am in court, that would be a very good thing indeed!

ROCKS OR WATER BALLOONS —

COMMUNICATION FOR THE CLASSROOM



By Rabbi Moshe Braham,

*Deputy Head at Immanuel
College Prep School*

This article is NOT (exclusively) for teachers but for anyone involved with children in education – parents, grandparents, carers etc.

The current buzzword in the world of education (and beyond) is ‘neuro-diversity.’ This simply means that we recognise that people’s brains are wired differently to one another and therefore are prone to having different interests, abilities, needs and methods of learning. This also necessitates education to start from the point of the learner.

For example, a child who cannot sit still in the classroom is not incapable of learning. He or she may just need different methods of communication, goals, tools or environments in which to learn those things that will make them the most successful versions of themselves.

One of the earliest examples of differentiated communication can be found at Mount Sinai. G-d tells Moses to inform the children of Israel that they have been chosen to be His special nation, “So you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.” Rashi asks two incisive questions on this seemingly repetitious command, aren’t the ‘house of Jacob’ and the ‘children of Israel’ one and the same? Why does G-d change the language of instruction from ‘say’ to ‘tell’?

Rashi explains that the ‘house of Jacob’ refers to the Jewish women, while ‘the children of Israel’ refers to the Jewish men. As for the message that Moses was supposed to convey to these distinct groups...it was identical. The only difference was to be in the style of delivery. Rashi goes on to explain that the command to ‘say’ to the women meant that Moses should speak to them in a soft tone. To the men, however, Moses was commanded to ‘tell’ them in a harsher tone so that they would understand the great significance and responsibility in accepting to become the Chosen Nation of G-d.

The Creator knew which delivery style was necessary for the different groups of that time. It worked. The

message was duly received, the proposal accepted, and the collective response that our ancestors gave, “Naaseh v’Nishma” – “We will do and we will listen,” indicating an acceptance of what was already known plus an undying wish to learn more, endears us to G-d for eternity.

Our primary job as educators, whether we are teachers or parents, is to promote a desire for greater, continued learning and to enable that learning to take place.

My children love playing with water balloons, and, as long as they remain outside, I am happy that they are happy. What I like less, is when they come in asking me to help them fill an already partially filled balloon that slipped off the tap. It is more than likely that through my efforts to add more water, the water already inside the balloon will come squirting out (all over me!). The water balloon is a strange thing. If you don’t fill it to capacity on the first go, it is very hard to add more water once you put some in. The more you put in it, the more the neck tries to close, preventing more water from being added.

We don’t want our children to be water balloons, where we force feed knowledge whilst simultaneously turning them off to the more important goal of becoming life-long learners.

In the famous story of Rabbi Akiva, as a 40 year old ignorant shepherd watching over his flock, he noticed a rock lying at the foot of a small waterfall. Akiva perceived that over time, the rock had developed a hole due to the drops of water that were steadily falling on it. And all of a sudden, he had an epiphany... If soft water has the capacity to bore a hole in hard rock, surely a regimented study of the Torah could turn simple Akiva into a scholar. Akiva gave up his job, went off to study for 24 years and, exceeding all expectations, he became the leading scholar of his generation by the age of 64.

What was it in particular that convinced Rabbi Akiva of his ability to change? A rock sitting passively while water steadily erodes a hole in it is a far cry from the huge efforts a Talmudical scholar has to invest in order to reach academic excellence and flawless character development. The comparison can hardly be called a comparison at all!

I would like to suggest a novel explanation.

The rock showed that all one needs to do is to be willing to receive, even if one hasn't been gifted with a natural ability to receive, process or retain knowledge. Unlike a water balloon which is a receptacle only when forced by significant pressure and which limits its own capacity for growth, the rock allows the drops of water to cascade off of it, knowing that it is absorbing little to nothing but confident that as long as it is ready to accept those drops, gradually, a hole will develop, capable of retaining the water that falls in to it. The longer the water falls, the wider the hole becomes, the larger and more capable a receptor the rock will be. Akiva understood that although he may not have been born with natural or obvious scholarly abilities, if he would just put himself in a learning environment and open up to receiving wisdom, over time, he would find his abilities increase exponentially. Rabbi Akiva became the prime example of what real success in education looks like.

How can we achieve this success for our children?

As parents and educators we can be demanding. We want to see results. We want to know that our children have learned lots of information. Occasionally, we can feel frustration about our children's progress, what and how they are learning. However, what we must bear in mind is that although the style, method and content of learning is not and should not be universally uniform, what should be universal is the positive attitude we have and that we engender towards education in general and our children's education in particular. Children must only hear about and sense our vital partnership with and respect for our educational institutions, and our deep joy in the fact that they are learning. We must only communicate positivity about education to our children so that they grow into ever increasing receptacles of wisdom, like Rabbi Akiva's rock, and ultimately like Rabbi Akiva himself. If we do this, we can be sure the water balloons will stay outside where they belong.



$$2 + x = 4$$

$$x = 4 - 2$$

$$6 \cdot x = 12$$

$$x = 12 : 6$$

$$x = 2$$

$$\pi : 6 \cdot 2 = 12$$

$$40 : x = 4$$

$$x = 40 : 4$$

$$x = 10$$

$$\pi : 40 : 10 = 4$$



SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

The Clean Speech Magazine reached out to Mrs Juliette Lipshaw to tell us about her experiences as the Headteacher of Sinai Primary School, the largest Jewish primary school in Europe, and how communication impacts the running of a school.

– Juliette Lipshaw

Juliette Lipshaw is the Headteacher of Sinai Jewish Primary School, the largest Jewish Primary School in Europe. She has been working in education for over 29 years. She holds a Bachelor of Education, a National Professional Qualification for Headship and is currently completing a National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership. Mrs Lipshaw is a trained Coach and has mentored many Senior Leaders.



As a child, (I am myself a former Sinai pupil,) I used to line up my teddies and dolls in the lounge, give them all a pencil and a house point or two and teach them maths with my mini blackboard. I realised from a young age that engaging with my audience was important.

As the Headteacher of Europe's largest Jewish primary school I am responsible for educating the next generation and the future leaders of the UK Jewish community. A priority for us at Sinai is to ensure that our children learn to articulate themselves and to speak with kindness and respect to everyone in the Sinai community. We want the children to have the freedom of speech to be able to talk about what is important, explore their ideas and their identities and of course to be tolerant of each other and each other's differences.

I am always proud of the little people that fill my

classrooms and I am committed to teaching them that everyone has something different that they can contribute and each voice is an important one to hear.

We expect exceptional behaviour for learning in the classroom and that stems from communicating with one another effectively and with respect.

As educators we must lead by example. Communication is a fundamental life skill that is essential for success in a school as it helps to create a safe learning environment with supportive relationships.

When communication is effective, our children feel comfortable in the classroom and therefore learn best. It also helps teachers understand the children's perspective and for the children to work collaboratively which improves performance. Knowing our children allows our teachers to understand the needs of every child and provide effective feedback to the parents and guardians.

Everything I do and every decision I make is with the children at the core, but we also have different stakeholders. We regularly communicate with our parents, prospective parents, governors, supporters, the wider community and each other as professionals.

Good communication is the key to establishing meaningful relationships across all members of the Sinai community.

I have learnt that at times over communicating is best. I am acutely aware that there are plenty of memes and jokes about the amount of emails a school might send – but the truth is that we are looking after little people – educating, shaping, nurturing – hundreds of children.

I communicate with our Sinai families, every week, on a Friday, with my 'Shabbat Shalom from Mrs Lipshaw' emails. Keeping the communication channels open is a big part of keeping people motivated and ensuring the children on track. It is also an opportunity to ensure that everyone feels part of a community and plays their

part in our success story. We have a wonderful name in the community and that is because our Sinai families are kept abreast of school improvements and their child's development and wellbeing. Communicating regularly allows our parents and families to be our very best ambassadors through word of mouth.

Nothing should ever come as a surprise to a parent of a school child, so regularly informing our parents about their child's academic success or struggles is paramount in working together to ensure each child is reaching their fullest potential.

Of course, not all communication can be planned in advance. Working in a busy school means that we regularly have to adapt to ever-changing situations and we must be prepared at all times to communicate in real time across a range of mediums. One thing that is crucial is to maintain a clear and consistent message.

**Good communication helps
build trust and rapport at Sinai
and is a key component of
effective leadership,**

which is why, as Headteacher, I make a commitment to our Sinai families and staff to always listen and communicate honestly, openly and transparently.



INSTILLING HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM IN OUR CHILDREN THROUGH HOW WE SPEAK

Mrs Alli Sturgess,

*CBT Psychotherapist PgDip, Supervisor
and Mental Health Educator*

Alli holds a postgraduate diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Complimentary Therapies from University of Hertfordshire. She has been CBT therapist for Stamford Hill's Bikur Cholim Emotional Wellbeing department for 8 years and has recently been appointed manager of their Low Intensity CBT department. She produces and delivers mental health education for various Jewish organisations and has run her own private practice for 4 years. She is also Rebbetzen of St Albans United Synagogue.



Before exploring ways through which our speech can improve our children's self-esteem, we first need to know what we are aiming for. How do we know if our children are developing healthy self-esteem?

Generally, children with healthy self-esteem have a positive image of themselves, rather than feeling unlikeable or inadequate. They can make friends and play in groups or alone. They try to solve problems but are willing to ask for help, rather than not trying or refusing to seek assistance. They are often proud of their achievements rather than never feeling good enough, and can generally admit to mistakes rather than becoming defensive. They will generally be open to trying new things rather than avoiding new situations (youngminds.org.uk).

The textbook methods for achieving the above are: providing your child with compliments, encouragement, less criticism, physical affection and loving words. However, Dr Tamar Perlman, a clinical psychologist and popular speaker, suggested that what we **ACTUALLY** need to work on developing in our children is self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is having the belief you are capable of performing a task or managing a situation and being willing to learn how to persevere when you do not succeed at first. When a child attributes success to internal factors, they develop a sense of mastery, which reinforces stronger self-efficacy beliefs (aboutkidshealth.ca).



So how do we build self-efficacy in our children through the way we speak?

1. Be the change you want to see

Although we are talking about speech, we are not talking about lectures! Values are caught, not taught. Modelling, through our own behaviour, is how children predominantly learn from parents. Therefore, it's the way we talk that imprints itself the most; the tone, the facial expressions and the consistent helpful phrases used.

2. Praise effort

Praise effort in a detailed way, more than achievements. It is especially important to praise effort when they struggle through adversity. If we struggle in praising effort, it can be helpful to ask ourselves, "How would I like my parent or partner to talk to me when I manage to do something I really don't want to do?" Imagine pushing yourself to do something difficult, how did it feel? Get in touch with your own experience and vocalise that to your child.

3. Don't TRY to create high achievers

We do not want to model being perfect parents. Kids who feel the need to achieve highly can become highly anxious, stressed, obsessive, low, self-critical adults. The more we can model that having weaknesses and making mistakes is normal, the more balanced our children will be.

How can we best model this through the way we speak? We need to act as role models by being

the humble parent who says sorry and thank you. Both of these expressions are hard to say. Why? Because they imply weakness and that I was lacking. Openly apologise to and thank your spouse and other adults in front of your children. Create an environment of authenticity and of self-growth where we can admit to our mistakes and learn from them. Share stories with your children about how you messed up today but how you managed to overcome yourself.

4. Build copers

Children who believe they can cope are generally less anxious, have more self-confidence and are more resilient. There are two ways we can develop copers through the way we speak. We can encourage problem-solving language. When our kids are struggling, validate their feelings so they feel heard and understood, then help them solve the given problem solve. Repeat similar lines often that will eventually stick, such as:

"When this happened last time, what did you do that helped?"

"Let's think together what options you have to sort this out"

"If you had to choose between two not great options, which one would you pick? What are the possible consequences for each?"

"If your friend was stuck in the same way, what might you advise them?"



Interestingly, we can also build copers when we hold back speech. Sometimes we meddle too much in our kids' struggles. Dr Sara Yaroslavit, an occupational therapist and parenting expert in the US, says, "to help our children become resilient and better copers, we need to sometimes let them struggle."

What does this mean? We must attend to their primary needs, but when a child has not come to you and you can hear them struggling, don't rush in. Give them a chance to persevere and learn that they can cope alone.

For example, when a child's tower collapses and he shouts and kicks, as long as he is safe, LEAVE THE CHILD, DON'T GET INVOLVED. What can ensue? With time, his energy calms down as he starts to self-soothe. This might be tapping the cupboard with his foot or stroking the floor. In this precious moment, he is learning he can bring down this negative emotion by himself. Then, he might build the tower again or choose something else to do. He is learning that when something bad happens, he can sort the situation out by himself, and that negative emotions are uncomfortable but not uncontrollable.

Parents often run in as it is uncomfortable to hear our child suffering. If we can force ourselves to go through that discomfort, for the sake of making space for our children to grow, then we will help them develop better self-efficacy and therefore healthier self-esteem.

Two final points. Water the flowers not the weeds! Compliment the behaviours you want to see more of in your children and ignore the behaviours you don't want to see. This keeps unhelpful, painful criticism at bay. And finally, let us close with SUCH a key lesson from Sara Chana Radcliffe, a psychologist, author and speaker. She highlights an important life-changing point in her book *Teen Esteem*: the way we talk to ourselves in our heads is the way our primary caregivers spoke to us. What voices do we want in our child's head when they hurt themselves, fail or feel sad? If we wouldn't like our spouse or parents to talk to us like that, then there's a good chance that it's the wrong thing to say - if we would, then we are on the right path.



ENHANCING COMMUNICATION WITH AUTISTIC CHILDREN:

STRATEGIES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

– Jenny Sandler



Jenny of Homeschool UK (www.homeschooluk.com) works one-on-one with dyslexic, autistic and ADHD young people to help them with their academic learning and executive function skills (including organisation, revision skills and time management). Along with providing support for cognition and learning, Jenny consults with parents and schools on how to make adaptations and accommodations to the home and school environments. Jenny has many years of professional and practical experience enhanced by a master's degree in dyslexia and a Master of Education in autism in children. She also has the lived experience of parenting an autistic child.

In the following article, Jenny Sandler who is a specialist autism, ADHD and dyslexia teacher and consultant, shares 7 tips for speaking to autistic children to foster understanding and communication that creates an inclusive and nurturing environment.

1. The Unimportance of Eye Contact:

Eye contact is often considered an important aspect of communication, but it is not necessary for autistic individuals to make eye contact when speaking as it can be physically uncomfortable. Neurotypical children and adults often do not make eye contact when speaking and in some cultures making eye contact is considered to be rude. However, it is reasonable to request that your child faces in your direction so you can hear them clearly but without causing them the discomfort that comes with looking someone in the eyes.

2. Recognising Attention Cues:

Effective engagement with autistic children requires an understanding of how they express that they are listening and paying attention. Each child may exhibit unique cues indicating their level of engagement. By observing and even asking the child about their individual signs of attentiveness, we gain valuable insights, helping us recognise whether they are genuinely engaged in the conversation or not. If the child you are talking to is not paying attention then you may need to consider if it is the best time to talk to them or if you need a different tactic to get their attention.

3. Allowing Processing Time:

Autistic individuals often require additional time to process and understand information. It is essential to offer them the necessary processing time without rushing or interrupting. Allowing approximately ten seconds before expecting a response allows the child to work through the information adequately. Speaking slowly, enunciating clearly, and incorporating pauses between instructions or thoughts enhances comprehension and provides the speaker with more time to choose words thoughtfully, avoiding unnecessary fillers that can distract and clutter speech.

4. Navigating Literal Language:

Autistic individuals tend to interpret language literally, which can lead to confusion when encountering figurative expressions and idioms. Explaining figurative phrases to both autistic and non-autistic children promotes a broader understanding of language and culture. However, it is important to consider the child's age and stage of development when using expressions and idioms.

5. The Power of Positivity and Visual Aids:

Positive commands yield better responses from children, including those on the autism spectrum. Framing instructions in a positive and constructive manner creates a receptive environment and promotes active engagement. Incorporating visuals, particularly in noisy environments, enhances understanding by complementing the verbal instructions.

6. Short Instructions and Checking Comprehension:

To avoid overwhelming them, it is crucial to keep instructions concise and tailored to their age and developmental stage. After giving instructions, pause to ensure they have understood the information provided. Encouraging your child to repeat back the instructions lets you know that they have heard what you said.

7. Transitioning with Ease:

Transitioning from one activity to another can be challenging for autistic children. To facilitate smoother transitions, providing transitional activities before issuing instructions for a new task can help the child disengage from their current activity and signal the start of a new one.

Due to environmental factors, autistic children often experience sensory overload and anxiety; utilising these speech techniques can support and maintain regulation for an autistic child. While we may not be able to control every aspect of the environment in order to reduce sensory overload, we can control our word choice and speaking style. By speaking slowly, clearly, and logically, we contribute to a regulated and supportive atmosphere.

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

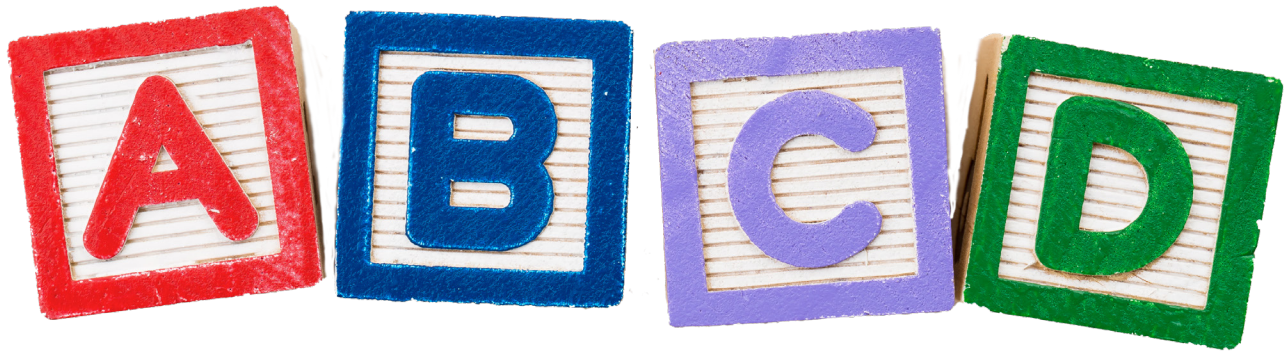
– Belinda Seeff-Gabriel,

Phd, FHEA Specialist Speech & Language Therapist, Specialist Teacher



Belinda Seeff-Gabriel has a PhD in developmental speech disorders, and 22 years of concurrent academic and clinical experience. She is passionate about raising the quality of clinical practice in the profession and has a wealth of theoretical knowledge and practical insights to share. She prides herself on decades of inspiring students and professionals alike, and has always received very enthusiastic feedback from those she has 'taught.'





How did it happen? In four short years, the cooing baby you held in your arms has transformed into a little person, conversing with you and sharing all manner of information about his/her wants, needs and experiences. S/he has a vocabulary so vast and uses long complex sentences. It is nothing short of a miracle! As parents, we play a pivotal role in fostering our children's language skills before they go to school, as this is a crucial window of opportunity for linguistic development. There are a few useful points to consider:

1. Your home environment plays a central role in shaping your child's language development. Create a language-rich atmosphere by surrounding your child with books, story-telling and engaging conversations. Homes, where discussions are valued and encouraged, facilitate better language acquisition. Begin reading to your child from a very early age to encourage general language development, listening skills and promote bonding between you and your child.
2. Comparing your child's language skills to that of others, isn't always helpful. There is a wide range of what is considered 'typical' development in the first few years. The process of acquiring sounds and words, being able to combine them into sentences, may be more or less difficult for some pre-school children, and this does not suggest a general learning difficulty. Rather than explicitly correcting your child, repeat back the correct model of the word/phrase immediately after your child has attempted the production. Be patient and supportive as your child progresses through the different stages of speech and language development and celebrate each step.
3. Singing songs and reciting rhymes is not only fun, but is beneficial for your child's language development. It enhances your children's sound awareness – helping them to recognise sounds and patterns in their language. Encourage your children to sing along and carry out the actions. From when your child is four years of age, you may go so far as to make up your own silly rhymes like 'Would you like some funny honey bunny?' or play 'I spy...'
4. It is okay for your child to use 'babytalk' at the appropriate age. Have you thought about why most children say 'doggy' and 'horsey'? They are not trying to be cute. Rather, it is easy for them to produce a word with consonant-vowel-consonant vowel combinations, like 'doggy' rather than consonant-vowel-consonant sounds like 'dog.' Once again, don't explicitly correct the child. Rather repeat the word back to the child 'yes, the dog.....'
5. If you have any concerns about your child's speech and language development, it is never too early to seek advice from a Speech and Language Therapist. By identifying and providing appropriate support at an early age, potential obstacles can be overcome and the child can be supported to reach his or her full potential.
6. Remember that good oral language skills are the foundation upon which literacy (reading and writing) is acquired. A child who has good oral language skills, and is able to 'play' with the sounds of a language, is more likely to find the process of learning to read and write relatively easy.

LOOKING UP, SPEAKING UP

– Rabbi Daniel Fine



Rabbi Fine is one of the founders of Clean Speech Project UK. He is Seed's Director of Education and teaches at Hasmonian and the Evening Beis. He is a former double gold-medal winner at the Maccabi Games, has a law degree from LSE and has written three books.



In his celebrated 900-year old letter to his son about humility, the Ramban instructs ‘your head should look downwards, your heart upwards.’ The Ramban isn’t dishing out cardiovascular guidance, he is reminding us that we are to balance humility and recognise our limits with ambition and acknowledging our greatness. In order to make this article worthwhile and hopefully impactful for you, the reader (hello!), let’s begin with two exercises:

1. Look up

– naturally, we focus on things that are eye-line level. In fact, a product brand got into trouble for sending representatives into major supermarkets to secretly switch their products to eye-line level places on shelves.

Now intermittently for the rest of the day I want you to glance above eye-line and see what you notice. You may see a treetop you didn’t realise existed before. You may spot a flat on top of a shop you’ve never seen, you may simply focus on the aesthetics of something you knew existed but never really focused on. Internally, we sometimes work like this as well – we just accept things as ‘they are always like this, they aren’t going to change,’ without creating a clear upwards-looking vision and ambition to improve.

2. Lurking lexis

– this exercise is a bit harder and may only work with a few people with whom you interact. I happen to notice it ‘all the time’ (that’s colloquial speak for ‘often!’). I don’t know what the official term for this phenomenon is, but it’s when one word subconsciously curates a connected word later in the sentence or conversation. I’m going to call it ‘lurking lexis.’ For example, person A is speaking to person B, the topic being a prisoner. They say the following: ‘I can’t believe this prisoner has received such a harsh sentence – I wonder when they will be released. Anyway, must dash – need to escape to do some duties. Great talking to you.’ Person A inserted the word ‘escape’ in their sentence when ordinarily another word would have been used; they subconsciously used the word ‘escape’ simply because they were previously referring to a prisoner. That is ‘lurking lexis’ (and the word ‘duties’ is probably another iteration of the same concept). Once you notice it, it can be seen frequently. ‘What did you do on Sunday?’ ‘I redid parts of my garden.’ If the words ‘green,’ ‘plant’ or ‘grow’ appear soon after, you’ve got your lurking lexis *parked* right there!

The reason these two observations or exercises are important is because as the world develops in science and as words proliferate, *the science of words* becomes more crucial too. The marketing industry invests billions of dollars into working out which words are likely to elicit which reactions. And as Jews we should be doing the same. **We should be ahead of the ‘verbal game’** in assessing which words we will choose to use – ‘because if I say x then the person will react in such and such a way.’



One of the keys to growth
is being proactive not
reactive.

One of the keys to growth is being proactive not reactive. If others dictate our beliefs, values and perspectives, we are not being ourselves (this does not mean that we can’t choose our influences, teachers and role models). If situations alone form our moral compass then we risk having outsourced that moral compass to experience alone. As bastions of ethical monotheism, our task is to be proactive – seek, think, learn, teach – shine your light for others instead of being outshone by things that influence you.

When we use words (and we do a lot!), let’s pay attention to the subtleties of meaning, impact and influence that those words have – on others but also on the way we think. Anyone who has had the pleasure of studying Torah texts will know that a great deal is invested in analysing words – ‘Why did the Gemara phrase it like this? What is that word teaching us?’ It is the word sensitivity that underlines the spiritual accuracy of our prayers.

As much as we look up and notice what’s about eye-level, we need to make sure we speak up too; take control of our conversation in making sure the words we speak are positive, impactful and have the right subtleties.

THE GIFT OF WORDS



— Shira Joseph

Shira Joseph is the programme director at GIFT Charity. She has been working in informal education for almost 20 years and is passionate about young people being given the tools to make a difference in the world.



Recently, while I was in a restaurant picking up some lunch, a woman approached me and introduced me to an older lady. "Mum!" she exclaimed, "This is Shira, the woman I told you about—the person who changed my life and is responsible for my success." I was taken aback by this encounter because I couldn't even recall this person's name, yet apparently, I was being credited with her success.

As it turns out, 15 years ago, when I worked as an informal educator in a high school, I had asked for someone to write an article for a school publication. This girl had volunteered and submitted an article about a trip. Apparently, I had approached her in the corridors afterwards to express how impressed I was with her writing and encouraged her to continue developing her talent with words. She had taken my words to heart, worked on her writing skills, pursued journalism in university, and now enjoys a successful career with a large publication.

This incident got me thinking about how often we focus on the words we shouldn't say, instead of realising the impact our words can have on others. If we understood the power of the words we do say, we could potentially make an enormous difference in the lives of those around us.

There is a well-known principle called the "Poker Chip theory" that equates someone's self-esteem to the number of 'poker chips' they have.

Having worked in the field of education for several years, I have seen that educators, parents, and even friends have the power to give others poker chips whenever possible.

This can be done through sharing a kind word, positive feedback or taking the time to write a nice message on someone's work. By doing so, we can boost their self-esteem and provide them with a sense of purpose, especially among young people who often lack these affirmations.

I was not the greatest student in school. However, recently, when looking through my childhood bedroom drawer, I found a slip of paper that had been cut out of my school report. I found it puzzling why I had taken the time to preserve a few sentences tucked inside a folder alongside my GCSE certificates. To my surprise, it was a message from my former year leader in my end of year report who recognised my potential and highlighted some strengths she had observed in me. This contrasted sharply with the usual comments I received, such as "if she could only stop chatting for a moment..." Nevertheless, it left such a lasting impact on my younger self that I held onto it for years.

Sadly, the fast pace of life can hold us back from engaging in these meaningful conversations with others. Additionally, expressing admiration or pointing out positive traits in someone may require a level of vulnerability or humility. Yet, if we could comprehend the profound impact our words could have on others, I am confident that the time taken and potential discomfort would be worth it.

It is not only the recipients of these words who benefit from such positivity. Looking out for the good qualities in others and expressing them trains us to see people in a more positive light. It also allows us to move past our own self-centeredness and ego. As it says in Ethics of our Fathers, "Who is honourable? One who honours every human being." So, let us take the time to honour others, distribute those metaphorical poker chips, and who knows what life-changing directions or careers may emerge from these conversations.

**STICKS
AND STONES
MAY BREAK
MY BONES
BUT WORDS
WILL NEVER
HURT ME?**



– Hannah Sher, BSc, MSc

Hannah Sher is an educator at Seed Manchester. She holds an MSc in Clinical and Health Psychology and enjoys reading, connecting with people and spending time with her family.

Words
WON'T
hurt me...

Words CAN
hurt me...

The above rhyme is reminiscent of what was said in the school playground when we didn't want others (or maybe ourselves) to know how hurtful their words actually were. Is there truth to this rhyme though? Let's have a look at how in fact, words have an enormous power to make or break a person and then explore how we can bring ourselves to a point where sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.

There is a large amount of research which demonstrates that positive and negative speech affects us on a deep psychological level as well as significantly impacting the outcome of our lives. Dr Maria Richter conducted a neuroscience experiment by studying the brain's responses to negative speech. The findings of this study suggested that negative speech released stress and anxiety inducing hormones in its participants. Further research suggested that consistent exposure to negative speech can contribute to long-term anxiety disorders.

On the opposite side, according to Dr Andrew Newberg, another neuroscientist, and Mark Robert Waldman, a communications expert, exercising positive thoughts and being exposed to positive speech can literally change one's reality. This is because over time, hearing consistent positive speech can change our perception of ourselves and those around us. Holding ourselves in positive regard assists in training our brain to see the good in others.

Through a combination of the above research, paired with our day-to-day encounters with others, we can clearly see the impact of both positive and negative speech in our everyday lives. If we keep this in mind, we can include more positive speech in all of our relationships, with our spouses, children and siblings, to shape a better reality for ourselves and them too.

Unfortunately, with all the good intentions in the world, being exposed to negative speech is an inevitable part of life – we just need to learn how to handle it. We cannot control what others do to us, we can only control what **we** do in response. Our goal here is to build emotional resilience in response to negative speech. Resilience refers to the ability to cope with and bounce back strongly and quickly from life's challenges. **Unfortunately, personal growth largely occurs in our 'discomfort zone', where our mental and emotional limits are tested.** In this article, we will discuss resilience in relation to negative speech.

There are many psychological theories and stances which assist in building resilience. However, in this article, I'd like to focus on adjusting our perspectives on a philosophical lever in order to build resilience.

In Judaism, we have the *mitzva* of being '*dan l'kafzchus*' – judging others favourably. This is applicable to all situations we encounter but can be especially pertinent when we are on the receiving end of negative speech. Negative words say more about the person saying them than they do about the person they're being said to. As the saying goes, 'hurt people, hurt people.' Other people's words and perceptions **do not** define us.

Additionally, the interpretation of other's words can be extremely subjective. What upsets us may not bother someone else and vice versa, what we are impervious to may deeply hurt someone else. Moreover, negative encounters can vary according to so many factors, mood, circumstances, personality and sensitivity levels just to name a few. If we actively refuse to take offence at someone's words, the hostile power of the words is lost – offence is **taken, not given.** **We** have the power to determine the meaning we will give to another person's words. **We** control our thoughts and **nobody** else.

Remember, we must build ourselves and those around us by moving away from negative speech and using positive speech only. Not only will we create a beautiful reality for ourselves and our contemporaries, but we will also become more resilient as we do so. This will then enable us to be able to really believe that 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me!'

IF YOU CAN'T SAY IT, SING IT!



– Gabriella Jo Freilich

Gabriella received a BA (hons) in Jewish Education from LSJS and then went on to obtain QTS with the Torah Teaching Training Scheme. She is a full-time primary school teacher and continues to inspire and educate others as well as being a wife and mum.



Speech distinguishes humans from other animals and helps us to emulate G-d. The word “Jew,” is related to “lehodot” which means to thank. Jews are a people defined by gratitude. We are thankful for the power of speech and the voice we have been given, our job is to utilise it. We start the day singing “modeh ani...” When we start our day with gratitude, we remind ourselves how lucky we are to have a new day ahead of us and how lucky we are to have everything we have been given. It is through speech that we affirmed our commitment to our Covenant at Har Sinai when we proclaimed, “na’aseh v’nishma.” It is through davening that we speak to Hashem on a daily basis, bringing a positive spiritual influence into the mundane.

Being married to a singer, it won’t shock you that I’m going to write about the power of music to ignite a special light. Music is everywhere (especially in our house)! The owl hooting in the silence of the night, the tip tap tap of my keyboard as I type this and the whooshing of flowing water are all examples of life’s music.

We shouldn’t just hear this music. We should use it. At the gym, the upbeat songs I play through my headphones get me moving.



Music connects me to my past, present and future.

I’ll hear a song and suddenly, I’m transcended back in time to a kumsitz in Sha’alvim seminary in Jerusalem.

Why does a song bring joy when we fail to comprehend the words behind it?

We can learn our answer from Miriam. She brought along a tambourine when we left Egypt. Why would anyone pack an instrument in their bag? My students once did a task in which they had to pack a bag for a journey with essential items, I can assure you, a tambourine did not

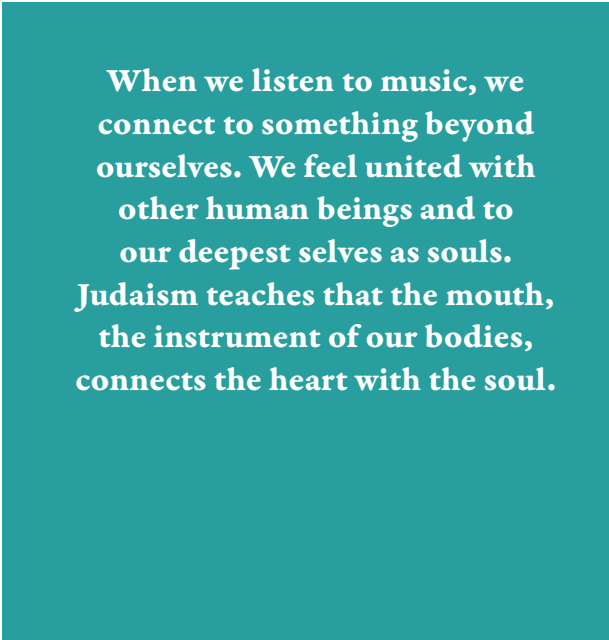
make the cut for ‘desert survival’! As a mother, I would have packed some extra snacks - more matzah in lieu of the tambourine, something more substantial.

Miriam had faith that G-d would save us from Egyptian slavery. Music conveys emotion too difficult for even our conscious minds to comprehend. It is beyond the rational. It is something more and that is how it can connect us to something beyond ourselves.

When the Jews crossed the Yam Suf and the Egyptians did not, Miriam whipped out her tambourine. She played, sang and danced with the other women. The music they played symbolised their faith and their joy more than words could ever express. Perhaps only music can adequately convey the feelings of shock and the utter excitement we felt from being freed from slavery. There were no words for our mixed emotions, so we sang. In song, our individual experiences get expressed in a unified way, I guess that is the power of a kumzitz. We understand that the song that is the human experience connects us even when our stories may be somewhat different.

An even stronger reason for Miriam’s song was the connection that she must have felt at this moment. G-d was now keeping His promise that He would create the Jewish nation. We had just gone from slavery to freedom. Singing represents movement and newness. This is essentially the power of creation. According to the Torah, the earth was created in seven days. There are seven notes on the musical scale. Seven is a very special number in Judaism; it represents completion. Seven symbolises the spiritual reality of the physical world.

Maybe that is the reason for music’s power to make us happy, to relax us, and to add meaning to our lives.



When we listen to music, we connect to something beyond ourselves. We feel united with other human beings and to our deepest selves as souls. Judaism teaches that the mouth, the instrument of our bodies, connects the heart with the soul.

When we join body with soul, we are complete. The music creates a state where we are in tune with our essential spiritual selves and can feel united with our Creator.

At its essence, music can be an expression of prayer. Perhaps this is why the Hebrew word for prayer 'tefilah', and the word for song, 'shira' have the same numerical value. Through song we can access the true yearnings of our soul, our prayers.

The most famous musical prayers are King David's psalms. Interestingly enough, the last psalm tells us to praise G-d with music. Jewish prayers are set to music because it is impossible to put into words what we truly are praying for. Sometimes, when praying, I don't know what to say to G-d. I remember this happening standing in the middle of Auschwitz... Music expresses that longing to say what is in my heart.

When you ignite someone's flame, your light doesn't become dimmer, it just makes the world shine brighter. I think that we frequently undervalue our mouths' potential to spread positivity, kindness and bring unity. It's our choice whether to be in the dark on the one hand, or to light a candle, or even a beacon, on the other. If everyone would use their words to compliment, express gratitude, share positivity, and to light a flame every day, the world would be a much brighter place.







THE POWER OF A WORD

– Rabbi Jeremy Golker

Rabbi Golker learned in Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh and Mir and then studied and practised law at a City law firm. He left law to pursue a career in teaching and has been the Menahel of Hasmonean High School for close to ten years. Rabbi Golker is a popular lecturer, giving shiurim in the wider community and on TorahAnytime.com.



Parshas Mattos begins with the laws of nedorim and we are reminded about the power of words. Through merely uttering a few words, a person can obligate him or herself with a vow and is required to fulfil the words expressed.

Indeed, the Ramban explains that is why the parsha begins:

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל רֹאשֵׁי הַמַּטּוֹת

And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes

The parsha of nedorim is specifically given to the Roshei HaMatos – the heads of the tribes, and not to the general population, in an attempt to somehow keep these laws a little under the radar. We don't shout them from the rooftops for fear of people treating them too lightly.

You sometimes hear a politician make grandiose promises to do things which are not just unrealistic but are simply beyond their control. "I will end poverty in this country" or "There will be no more homelessness" are pipe dreams. Using language which is more honest will probably be more appreciated by the listener.

“I will make every effort to reduce levels of poverty or homelessness” may not be as headline grabbing but the public may take you more seriously.

Speech is powerful. Speech is what differentiates us from animals. It epitomises the Divine within each of us. One of the most famous targumim in the entire Torah makes this point.

Regarding the creation of Adam HaRishon, the Torah (Bereshis 2:7) relates:

וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים, וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life

And man became a living soul

The Targum Onkelos defines the words לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה as “ruach memalela” a speaking spirit.

It is the power of speech that makes us human. That is why misuse of speech is treated so severely. Over a quarter of all the al' cheit's on Yom Kippur relate to speech.

We live in a world where words are sometimes cheap. We hear politicians freely promising all sorts of things – which are often simply beyond their ability to achieve. People saying things they don't mean or worse.

But words can also be incredibly powerful.

Rabbi Shais Taub tells the story of Jerome Motto, a forensic psychologist for the San Francisco Police Department. Mr Motto had the difficult and unenviable job of conducting forensic work when people would jump off the Golden Gate Bridge. He had to prove that there was no foul play.

How did he do that?

Motto would look for clues. It was obviously too late to interview the person, but he would retrace their steps

and prove that they were in a frame of mind that they wanted to take their own life. He would look at people's history and their background to see what happened right before they jumped.

Motto said that he got so used to this, he sadly saw so many dozens of jumpers, that he became numb to it. The Golden Gate Bridge has the sad status of being the most used suicide site in the world. Thankfully, after years of debate and an estimated 1,500 deaths, suicide barriers are being constructed.

However, Motto said that there was one story that shook him and he could never shake it loose. He said that one night they found another person who jumped. They found some ID and went back to the person's apartment and they found a note on the dressing table. Motto had seen this dozens of times.

But then he read the note and it completely shook him to the core.

The note said:

“I am walking to the bridge now. If one person stops me on the way and says hello, I'm turning around and coming home.”

Sadly, no one did.

We should not underestimate the fact that we can be that person for somebody else. We can be the one who cares. We can be the one who reaches out to somebody else. To the world, we may be one person, but to one person we may be the world.

That is the power of a word.



TORAH SPEECH

— Rabbi Adam Edwards

Rabbi Edwards is an experienced Seed educator who has pioneered and spearheaded various projects. He is instrumental in the Seed Poland and Israel trips, One2One and home group learning, and is a driving force in turning educational dreams into reality. He has an MA from the University of London in Jewish Education.



Parshas Matot begins with nedarim [vows]. The parsha begins in an unusual manner. Most Torah sections dealing with laws begin with the words ‘and Hashem spoke to Moshe saying...’ However, this parsha begins with the words ‘Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel saying...’ [Bamidbar 30:2]. Certainly, Moshe heard these laws from the Master of the Universe, but the verse is written as if Moshe himself was legislating these laws and passing them down to the leadership to teach the Children of Israel.

Secondly, the term ‘heads of the tribes’ is itself very unique. Usually, the Torah refers to these individuals as “princes”. Every tribe had its prince. Why does the Torah refer to the princes here as the “heads of the tribes?”

In answer to this question, Rav Nissan Alpert cites an issue raised by the Rashbam in Parshat Chukat. Parshat Chukat contains the incident in which the people did not have water after the death of Miriam. They complained to Moshe, and upon Divine direction, he went to the rock. However, rather than speaking to the rock, Moshe struck it. Because of that incident, Moshe and Aharon could not go into Eretz Yisrael.

The verse in Parshat Chukat says something strange in describing G-d’s instructions to Moshe. It says, “Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and you shall speak to the rock before their eyes and it shall give its waters.” [Bamidbar 20:8]. Hashem told Moshe to take the staff and speak to the rock. Many of the commentaries, including the Rashbam, ask the question — if the Almighty’s intent all along was that Moshe speak to the rock, why does He begin his directive with the words “Take the staff?” It is almost like Hashem is setting up Moshe for failure!

The answer that Rav Nissan Alpert gives (which is not the answer the Rashbam provides) is that the Almighty was trying to give Moshe a message, which he did not recognise until it was too late. After the sin of the waters, Moshe retroactively understood what Hashem was trying to tell him and first realised the nature of his mistake.

Hashem was trying to teach Moshe a lesson in how to deal with the Jewish people.

It is possible to get people to do things by one of two ways: One way is to force, coerce, or beat them with a stick. The other way is to speak to them and have influence through the power of words.

The Almighty was trying to teach Moshe that the second way is preferable. This is akin to the commonly heard expression “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

What is true of the “pen” is also true of the spoken word. Speech too can be mightier than the sword. Via the spoken word, a person can have tremendous influence on people. So Hashem told Moshe “Take the staff... and speak to the rock” to teach him a lesson: Yes, take the stick, but I want you to do something that is more powerful than using a stick — namely speak to the rock!

After the fact, Moshe realised his mistake. Hashem was not trying to trick him. He was teaching him a lesson that every leader needs to know. Every Rabbi needs to know this. The lesson is that the stick is not necessary. A person should “speak to the rock.” The lesson that one can accomplish more through speaking than through physical force is one which Moshe learned in a most painful way.

The parsha of vows is the Torah section that highlights the power of human speech. A glatt kosher beef sandwich can meet the finest standards of kashrus preparation, but if someone makes a vow forbidding it to himself and then eats it — this is as big a transgression as eating pig. The Torah grants a person a tremendous power to effect halachic imperative through his speech. That is why the parsha begins with the words “And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes.” Who knew this lesson — about the power of speech — better than anyone else did? Unfortunately, Moshe learned the lesson the hard way by not adequately considering the power of speech (when he opted to strike the rock rather than speak to it).

He spoke to the “heads of the tribes” — why does it say “heads of the tribes” and not “princes?” It is because matot has a dual meaning. Matot can mean tribes and it can mean sticks. Moshe is telling these future leaders of the nation “I am about to die. You will lead these people in the next generation. You can lead them with the power of the rod or the power of the tongue.” Moshe wants them to know that the power of speech is more effective than the power of the stick. Therefore, he addresses them as the “heads of the tribes” indicating to them that although they have the power of the stick (mateh/tribe) they should try to influence the people by the power of speech, which is greater than that of the stick.

KING SOLOMON'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY

– Rabbi Avraham Hassan



Rabbi Hassan is the educator's educator and has a long list of illustrious students including Rabbi Akiva Tatz – no less! For over two decades he ran the One to One programmes in the north of England and lectured on our seminars. More recently, as well as being Seed North's Senior Rabbinic Advisor, he gives classes on 'The Everyday and The Esoteric,' opening mystical texts to the modern mind

King Solomon, (C. 1000 BCE), was famously one of the wisest men in history. His extraordinary wisdom was no less than God-given! We read in Kings 1 Chapter 5:

9 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceedingly much, and largeness of heart, ...

10 And Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

11 And he was wiser than all men, ... and his fame was in all the nations around.

12 And he spoke three thousand proverbs, ...

If King Solomon says something, it is certainly worth considering! In Proverbs (13:3 and 21:23), he writes:

He who watches (guards) his mouth, guards his soul (himself); for one who opens his lips wide, there is ruin.

He who watches (guards) his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul (himself) from sufferings.

I guess we can all agree that we do not want ruin or sufferings. And one way to save ourselves from some sorts of ruination and suffering is to watch our tongues. Elsewhere in Proverbs (15:23), he says as follows:

A person will have joy with the response of the mouth; and how good is a word in time!

Speaking about one's simchas in a house of mourning is as thoughtless as speaking about tragedies at a simcha. So, let's stop and think!

From what sort of ruination or suffering are we going to save ourselves? And why? Can we think of examples? How do we need to speak to have joy from our responses? Can we think of examples?

Let's pause for a moment and THINK!

Ever heard the expression "I opened my mouth and put my foot in it"? Speech is our major method of communication. (At least, it used to be before texting!!)

Friendships are made with speech, but so are enmities. Our social standing in life is SO dependent on what we say. The right words at the right time can bring so much joy. Wrong words, words said in anger, with malice, or even said just thoughtlessly, can cause so much pain and strife.

But let us stop again for a minute. Do we need the wisdom of Solomon to tell us this? Surely, any thinking person could also come to the same conclusion?

Maybe King Solomon is also telling us that apart from the obvious, observable social consequences, one who watches his mouth is also impacting on a Heavenly level, and positive and negative spiritual consequences are also being triggered off in Heaven.

King Solomon teaches in Proverbs 18:21 the following powerful message:

Death and life are in the hand of the tongue.

This refers not only to physical life and physical death, nor only social "life" and social "death" but, also to spiritual life and spiritual death.

In later generations, our Sages told us (Sotah 42a) that those who habitually slander others and misuse their tongues in other ways, such as lying, scoffing, flattering, will be unable to face God in the future world (Olam Haba).

And King David famously said (Psalms 34:13-14) that eternal life is contingent on how we use our tongues. In his words:

Who is the person who desires life, who loves days to see goodness?

Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully. Our tongues can make us or break us, both in this life and the next.

Present and future joy depend to a large extent on the tongue.

A person will have joy with the response of the mouth; and how good is a word in time!

THE POWER OF WORDS

– Rabbi Alex Chapper



Rabbi Alex Chapper is the Senior Rabbi of Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue, the largest orthodox community in Europe. Previously he was the rabbi of Ilford Federation Synagogue. He is a regular contributor to Jewish media, and a popular public speaker.

It was reported in June that four children were rescued after surviving for forty days in the Amazon jungle following their plane crashing in the hostile Colombian jungle.

As she lay dying, their mother, Magdalena Mucutuy Valencia told her children to leave and find help. According to her eldest daughter, she urged them to "get out" and save themselves. After being rescued and airlifted to a military hospital in the nation's capital Bogota, the 13-year-old confirmed that her mother was alive for four days and before she died, told her and her younger siblings, "You guys get out of here. You guys are going to see the kind of man your dad is, and he's going to show you the same kind of great love that I have shown you."

This incredibly moving story proves that a mother's love for her children is like nothing else in this world. It also reminds us about the power of words. **Here, just two words were sufficient to save the lives of four children!**

The Gemara teaches us that life and death are in the power of the tongue. This is so much more than just an aphorism and it should be a guiding principle for us at every moment when we're about to speak, it should lead us to consider whether what we're planning on saying

will have a positive or negative impact on other people.

At the beginning of Bereishit, we learn that G-d said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In fact, the entire universe came into existence by the word of G-d which powerfully demonstrates that speech is profoundly creative.

We must always remember that we are created in the image of G-d which means that we have the same capacity to create our world through our words. We also possess free will and so we can choose to use positive and encouraging language to build up other people, and to improve the world around us.

The former Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks zt"l said, "We do not have to redeem the world all together in one go. We do it one day at a time, one person at a time, one act at a time. A single life, said the sages, is like a universe. Save a life and you save a world. Change a life and begin to change the world."

Every morning when we say, "Modeh Ani," we affirm that G-d has tremendous faith in us to make a positive contribution to the world and that is why we woke up. We can repay the trust that G-d placed in us by ensuring that everything we say improves the world around us and adds to the lives of others.



SAVE THE WORLD



– Rabbi Rafi Goodwin

Originally from Leeds and having studied Law at Birmingham, Rabbi Rafi was previously a campus Rabbi in Columbia, USA and Oxford. He is currently Senior Rabbi at Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue.



The Mishnah in Sanhedrin 37a famously teaches that Adam, the first human, was created alone in order to teach us that whoever destroys one soul is considered as if they have destroyed an entire world.

Since the whole human race issued from Adam, every human being has that same potential, and is as valuable and irreplaceable as the first.

In addition, for someone to destroy a precious soul automatically disturbs the equilibrium of the entire universe. With that soul now absent, the Universe is incomplete. A murderer is in effect saying that he/she knows better than G-d.

We know from our Rosh Hashanah prayers that G-d cares for each individual like a shepherd cares for his flock. We say in Unetaneh Tokef that “all created things pass before you, (one by one,) like a flock of sheep. As a shepherd examines his flock, making his sheep pass under his staff, so do You cause every living soul to pass (before You).”

A good analogy for this is when one watches a play at the theatre. Although there are many members of the cast, when one of the actors has the spotlight focused on them, even if there are many other people on stage at the same time, you zoom in and focus on that person alone. In that moment there is no-one else to focus on, only that individual. Since G-d is above time and space, He is able to see the entire universe at once, and at the same time focus, care and show love and affection for each individual like He did with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Returning to the language of the Mishnah, the Hebrew word לֹאֲבֹד – ‘to destroy’ is quite drastic. On a basic level, we understand it to mean that whoever destroys someone as in whoever murders someone has in turn destroyed an entire world.

However, as we know there are many references to certain sins being considered like murder. The phrase used to denote embarrassment in the Talmud is "להלבין פני חבריו" – to whiten the face of another. At

first, embarrassment causes the face to redden as the blood pools, then, as it drains away, the victim is left white with shame. The same is true when someone is killed, in that the colour fades from the victim's face.

We have to be so careful never to embarrass, shame or humiliate another person so as not to destroy people's worlds and at the same time G-d's flock which He gives His undivided attention to.

We have to be so careful never to embarrass, shame or humiliate another person so as not to destroy people's worlds and at the same time G-d's flock which He gives His undivided attention to.

Never before has the teaching from Mishlei (18:21) been so true:

“Death and life are in the hand of the tongue.”

Now if the negative effects of one's speech and social media posts can cause such havoc, imagine what we can achieve if we use our speech for the good. We can literally bring life, and like the Mishnah taught earlier, we will sustain and save people's worlds.

Although we often focus on the sin of gossip and tale-bearing, I believe we also need to get excited about the opportunity to praise, encourage and inspire others in a sincere and loving way. Positive speech achieves more than any other mitzvah as it literally *gives life* to people, and automatically once we have been blessed to give life to people, it becomes an anathema to ever want to do the opposite.

WORDS OF COMFORT:

THE MEANING OF HAMAKOM YENACHEM

– Lisa Levene



Lisa is the Rebbetzen at Hampstead Garden Suburb United Synagogue. Prior to this, she was the Rebbetzen at Belmont United Synagogue, she is a certified MEP teacher and has been trained in Taharat Hamishpacha under the auspices of Rebbetzen Tehilla Abramov. With over 25 years of professional experience in Human Resources, business development and consulting related capacities across both profit and non-for-profit sectors, Lisa brings a unique combination of professionalism and innovation to her communal role. She is a graduate of the Ner L'Elef training programme, the Bradfield programme run by LSJS, the Chief Rabbi's Ma'ayan programme and an international group of mentors (Core MMC). Possessing a Masters and a knowledge base rooted in business psychology, Lisa seeks to utilise this knowledge for the benefit of Anglo-Jewry and is currently involved in a few different projects to do just that, changing visions into realities.



In speaking about powerful words, I'd like to speak about some of the most powerful words Judaism has in our lifecycle – words that are uttered at a powerful and fragile moment – at a shiva.

**May the Omnipresent comfort you
among the mourners of Zion and
Jerusalem**

**המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי
ציון וירושלים**

**HaMakom yenchem etchem betoch
sha'ar aveilei Tziyon viYerushalayim**

As we listen to this being said, in English or Hebrew, sometimes the preference to say it in Hebrew adds awkwardness to an already painful moment. However, **understanding the words that are being said allows us to see the depth and beauty of the Torah's language** and offers a unique perspective on our loss. It is our intent that by exploring each of the words in turn we will, please God, reveal this.

HaMakom, The Place

Who can truly empathise with our loss? How can anyone else truly understand and appreciate our feelings or our circumstances? They can't! For some, time heals; for others, this is not true. Loss is unique, as is our individual reaction to it. Only God, who knows the secrets hidden in our hearts, is truly capable of recognising our loss and providing comfort to us. God has many names, these names are used to signify which of His many attributes and characteristics we are appealing to in a given moment. In this context, the use of HaMakom, literally meaning the place, has two powerful connotations.

The first is that God is the place, because He is omnipresent - He is in every place. Even when we find ourselves bereft and feeling alone, God is there with us. We begin this greeting with HaMakom to remind the mourner that they are not abandoned.

Furthermore, the place refers to where the soul is found

after death, reunited with God, where it too is being comforted by God's presence.

Comfort you

Much of Jewish prayer is written in the plural form as our destiny is intertwined. We use the plural language even when we pray alone and similarly here, the phrase is spoken in plural even when there is only one mourner sitting shiva.

But the plural in this particular phrase that God will comfort you (pl.) has a specific meaning. The plural refers to both the mourner and the deceased, both of whom should merit the Divine comfort.

The word used is aveilei - mourners – (we refer to a single mourner as an 'avel' and mourners as 'aveilim'). Once again, it is not unusual that we would use the term "aveilei" meaning mourners in the plural even when we are greeting a single individual. But here the plural is referring to the mourner as being part of the greater collective of the Jewish People. We are blessing the mourner that they will be comforted together with all the other mourners amongst the Jewish People.

Zion & Jerusalem.

All of the Jewish People are inherently mourning, even those who have not lost loved ones recently, or even at all. As a nation, we are in mourning for the destruction of our homeland and our Holy Temple. This is why during the 9 days between 1 - 9 Av every year we behave exactly as a mourner would; we employ the same limitations and restrictions on our lives as we mourn our intergenerational loss.

We invoke Jerusalem to convey that just as the Jewish people will one day be comforted over the destruction of Jerusalem with its rebuilding, so too, the mourners will one day be comforted by the loss of their loved one with the resurrection of the dead.

It is also a reminder that our homeland, a place set aside by God for us, has been acquired by immense pain and suffering. Remembering the loss of so many righteous and innocent people as we ourselves mourn, connects us to our past and future, and to each other. None of us are ever truly alone. We are part of a greater family and these words serve to infuse us with the responsibility we have to those who have come before us and those who will come after.

CLEAN JOURNALISM



– Vicki Belovski

Vicki Belovski is the former Rebbetzin of Golders Green Synagogue, a wife, mother and grandmother. A freelance journalist, she is the UK News Editor of Hamodia.

Learn from the best to ensure success

Reasons you will be successful

Travel is to make a journey or to go on an adventure somewhere by bicycle, train, airplane, car, motorcycle, or boat. It could be an exploration to somewhere new, planned or unplanned, to meet new people, new things and new places. There are several types of adventures waiting for you to



It is a process to allow an organization to focus resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve the company's target. Marketing strategy's goal is to increase sales and achieve the advantage over other competitors. It includes short term and long term analysis of a company's situation and its contribution to its objectives. The objectives will be based on how you gain sales by acquiring and keeping customers. It is a process to allow an organization to focus resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and



THE WORLD IS MESSED UP

It is a process to allow an organization to focus resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve the company's target. Marketing strategy's goal is to increase sales and achieve the advantage over other competitors. It includes short term and long term analysis of a company's situation and its contribution to its objectives. The objectives will be based on how you gain sales by acquiring and keeping customers.

Issue 764

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#Citydailynews

THE DAILY

WORLD NEWS: INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND FEATURES
READ THE LATEST STORIES ABOUT WORLD ON THE DAILY

SAVE THE CHILDREN
BELIEVE THAT EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FUTURE

It is a process to allow an organization to focus resources on the greatest opportunities to increase sales and

**"Not all that is thought
need be said, not all that is
said need be written, not
all that is written need be
published, and not all that
is published need be read."**

This statement, attributed to the Kotzker Rebbe, (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgensztern, 1787-1859) is as true today as it was 200 years ago. If anything, the huge expansion in means of communication makes having a filter even more important. Working for a newspaper aimed at the Orthodox Jewish community, there are opportunities to ensure that our content meets the highest standards of "clean news" every week.

Clean news in this context means that a sheltered child from a family which is careful about what they allow into their home can read the whole paper and not see anything inappropriate, either in content or language. We also have a policy that we do not deal in machlokes (controversy). Inevitably this means that we "miss out" on some of the more "juicy" stories which are published in the secular media, particularly in community news, and we run the potential risk of being both boring and self-congratulatory about the orthodox community. Nevertheless, having seen the damage which can be done both to individuals and to communities by printing negative stories about them, regardless of whether they are true or not, I'm proud to work for a newspaper which is very careful in this area.

Often when people are being interviewed, they will say things that they would prefer not to go into the written article. Sometimes they say, "This is off the record" or "I'm telling you this for background, but please don't write it

down." In those cases, I will make a point of putting my pen down, or even turning my recorder off. Very often, these snippets provide interesting information or details, but could cause damage if made public, and as a responsible journalist, I will respect the interviewee's wishes.

Similarly, if a story is reported in the mainstream press, but the organisation or person involved asks us not to cover it, we will respect that, even if the story is in the public domain. Sometimes, for example in areas such as planning, there are sensitive issues involved and too much publicity can be detrimental.

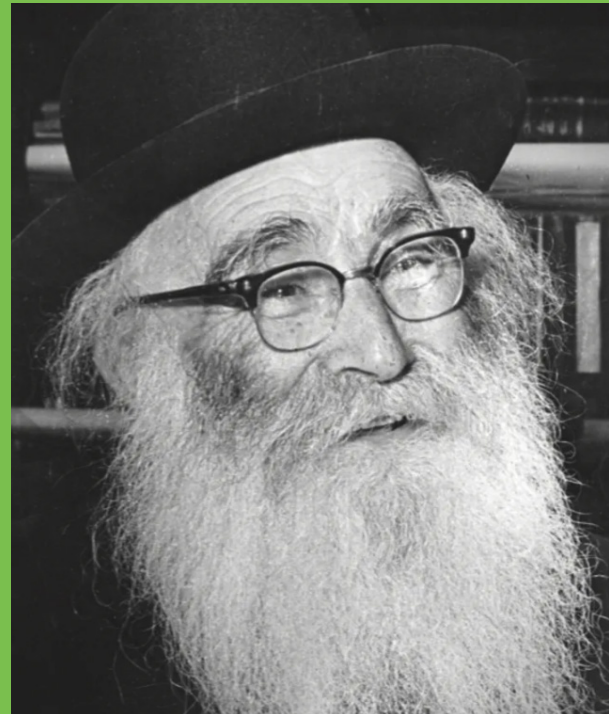
Context is also important. **A comment which is innocuous when said in context can become very damaging when repeated by itself.** Many people are tripped up by this, when journalists only quote the "interesting" part of the conversation, which can cause serious repercussions. And when that "interesting" quote is then used as the headline, (which by the way is often not the decision of the writer, but of the editor!), a pleasant interview becomes a PR nightmare.

While I have given specific examples from journalism, the concepts are the same in any interaction: not repeating negative stories or news which someone has asked us not to share; not taking a comment out of context for greater impact; and certainly not using words or discussing topics which are inappropriate or not "family-friendly."

One might have thought that the Chafetz Chaim, zt"l, who was so very cautious in what he said, would be a boring conversationalist, but reports from those who met him say that in fact, he was fascinating and had plenty to say, within the halachic framework of the laws of speech. Similarly, there are plenty of interesting topics whether news-related, historical, scientific or general knowledge, which can be covered in a kosher newspaper, or a kosher conversation. Clean speech can still be interesting!

5 COMMUNICATION STUDIES

– Editorial Team



Rabbi Aryeh Levin

In his commentary to the Torah, the Ibn Ezra writes that the Torah, the Jewish People and the world reflect each other. We can observe phenomena in the Torah, the people of the Torah, or the arena in which the Torah is to be practised – each are instilled with layers of meaning and depth. And given that a defining feature of mankind’s ‘Divine image’ is our ability to speak, here are some key studies about speech and some lessons to draw.

1. We instead of I

Rav Aryeh Levin (‘A Tzadik in our Time,’ 1885-1969) once went with his wife to the doctor. When describing

his wife’s foot ailment, Rav Aryeh said to the doctor ‘our foot hurts us.’ His framing of their relationship as one unit meant that ‘her foot’ was ‘our foot’ and ‘her pain’ was ‘our pain.’ Indeed, given our natural predisposition towards ourselves, the way we embrace others is by making ‘we’ part of ‘I’ – increasing our own identity to include others as part of myself in a sense.

The University of Columbia conducted a study of 5000 participants and 30 mini-studies. They found that **those who used ‘we’ instead of ‘I’ in their relationships had happier relationships.** One of the researchers said, “By examining all these studies together, they let us see the

bigger picture. 'We talk' is an indicator of interdependence and general positivity in relationships. The primary takeaway is that interdependence may bring about supportive and relationship-centred behaviours and positive perceptions of the partner — especially important in times of stress and conflict."

In fact, in 2021, the University of Texas study found that those relationships that were on the verge of breakup increasingly changed to using 'I' instead of 'we.' In analysing 6800 social media users, they found that three months before a relationship hit rocky terrain, the change occurred.

In his celebrated company guide *Good to Great*, Jim Collins observed that top-level ('level five') leaders' language regularly kept themselves humbly out of the spotlight – instead shining achievements on others. They always preferred to speak about the 'we' (the company) than the 'I.' In fact, those leaders who focused on themselves found their company eventually failing to grow.

2. Positive communication

Negative speech breeds negativity. I speak positive, I think positive. And vice versa. This is born out through various mitzvos in the Torah, through life experience and even through advertising rules too!

According to advertisement studies, **the use of certain negative words in marketing reduces one's chance of purchase success.** For example, the use of phrases that inject doubt, such as 'possibly' or negative-sounding words like 'problem' create unsureness and negative associations. In fact, the overuse of exclusive-sounding terms like 'ours' (as in 'our product') can also create a non-useful gap between seller and potential buyer.

3. Our words say a lot about ourselves

More than our words speak about others, they speak volumes about ourselves. The words we use characterise us – what sort of people we are and how we think. The impact of our words in defining us is so strong, it is for this reason that a person who spoke Lashon Hara in the wilderness would need to temporarily leave the three camps of society and exist alone until they reframed and reformed themselves.

The University of Pennsylvania research analysed

700 million words and phrases used online by 75,000 volunteers! They could guess a person's gender and age with respective accuracies of 92% and over 50% accuracy, simply based on words and phrases they used!

4. Context of words

Words do not live in a vacuum. Their interpretation, understanding and often impact depend on the prior relationship of the people involved. If one sibling says to another 'you are terrible' with a broad ear-to-ear smile on their face, the statement will be taken as a joke, perhaps even endearing. If a total stranger makes the same statement, chances are it won't be taken in such a positive light. One American study found that doctors who spend five minutes making general conversation with their patient before examining them were significantly less likely to be sued if they got something medically wrong – for the patient saw the doctor as 'a nice person who just made an unintended mistake.' Such is the power of words to create impression, rapport and relationship.

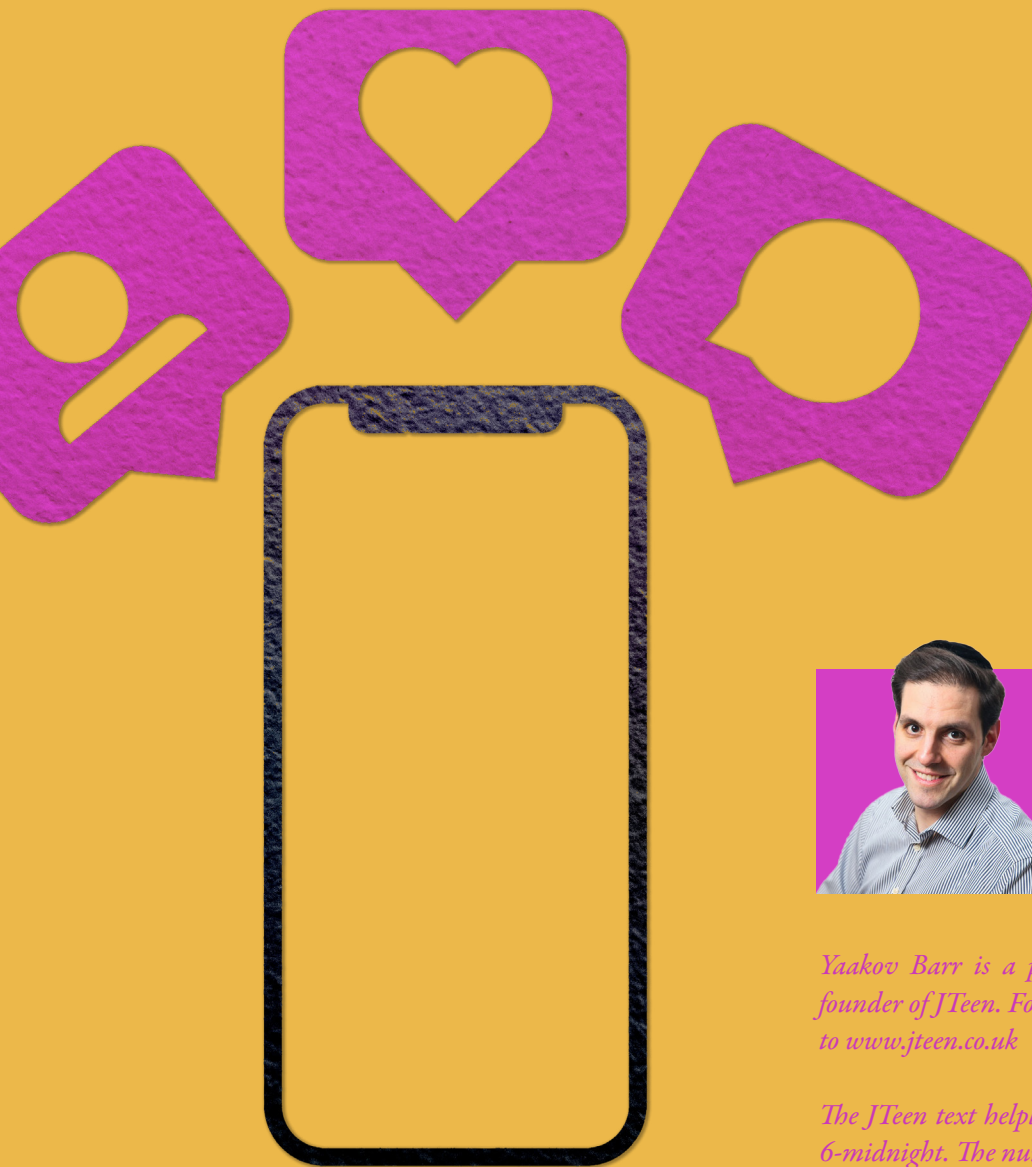
In their book "The Definitive Book of Body Language," Allan and Barbara Pease analysed thousands of sales across the 1970s and 1980s. They found that the major factor that caused a successful sale was not the words used, but the body language.

5. Language of success

Positive communication creates positive results. **The 2023 Harris Poll found that 72% business leaders felt that effective communication increases their team's productivity.** This productivity is more pronounced when it comes to gratitude.

Doctor Gordon's study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* explored the role of gratitude and appreciation in maintaining long and healthy relationships. In the study, 50 committed couples were given a week to fill out appreciation journals. On days when one partner reported feeling more appreciated, he or she tended to appreciate his or her partner more the next day. A study conducted by Wichita State University found that the top 5 of 65 motivating factors in the workplace were "praise related." Asked why they quit their jobs and many employees – up to 79% in one study – cite a lack of appreciation. In the words of entrepreneur Richard Branson, "Lay praise on people and people will flourish."

TALKING TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT DIFFICULT NEWS EVENTS



– Yaakov Barr
(MSc PG Dip)
psychotherapist

Yaakov Barr is a psychotherapist, clinical director and founder of JTeen. For further information about JTeen, go to www.jteen.co.uk

The JTeen text helpline is open for teens every night from 6-midnight. The number to text is 07860 058 823

With all the disturbing news stories in the world bombarding us on a day-to-day basis, it is understandable that some children will be emotionally affected.

When a young child is worried or feeling sad, it usually doesn't take much to make them feel better. Yet, when it is a teenage child feeling the same way, it is unlikely to be as simple. Parents often feel powerless when dealing with a worried or unhappy teen. Too often, they feel that the correct way is either to withdraw from their teenagers' issues or to invade their private space. In reality, the influence and appropriate involvement of parents is crucial in helping a teenager to navigate difficult situations which they encounter.

Here are some ways talking can help your teen cope with the current news events.

1. Quality talking.

If you suspect that your teenager is anxious, or perhaps you are concerned by some behaviours and emotions they are displaying, then, in a loving and non-judgmental way, share your concerns with your teenager. Let him/her know what you've noticed and why it concerns you. Then encourage your child to share what he/she is going through.

Teenagers will often be reluctant to open up. They may be ashamed and afraid of being misunderstood and may find it extremely difficult to express what they are feeling in words. Many times, I have heard teenagers tell me that their parents start giving advice and criticism as soon as they start sharing their feelings. So, try to hold back from asking lots of questions and making it feel like an interrogation, and instead make it clear that you're ready and willing to provide whatever emotional support they need.

Don't give up if your adolescent shuts you out at first. Talking about negative feelings is difficult for most of us and especially for teenagers. **Try and show your teenager that you care and are willing to listen.** If your teen claims that nothing is wrong, then perhaps monitor him/her for a few more days and if you continue to be concerned then be willing to have another conversation.

2. Validation

Sometimes a teenager will feel alone and confused. The reasons for their misery may seem trivial to a parent, but for the teen, these feelings are real. At moments like this, the challenge as a parent is to convey your unconditional love for them, no matter what the situation is. It may entail talking to them at length, validating their feelings and opinions and then perhaps demonstrating your affections with a hug. They may resist it at first, because they are uncomfortable or because they feel that they are burdening you but reassure them of your unconditional love and listen as much as possible. Of course, the stronger your 'everyday' relationship with your teen is, the easier it is to deal with the more testing issues that occur.

3. Try to mirror calm and stability

Try to seem calm even if you don't feel it. Our children are looking to us for how we respond to disturbing news stories. **It's OK if we don't have all the answers and although we might not feel it inside, children should see parents acting confidently.** Try to keep the daily routine going and at times deliberately steer conversations to topics other than the news.

4. Understand their fear

As parents, we tend to assume that our children are worried about the same things we are, but often they are not. When they raise their concerns, be curious and try to understand what's truly worrying them. For instance, if your child asks a question like "Is Russia going to war with Europe", you could ask: "What do you mean by that?" Or "What specifically is scaring you?"

5. Don't bring it up if your teen seems uninterested.

Some children will be fascinated by the news and will want to know more, but others may show no interest at all – and that's fine. Some parents feel that their children should be fully aware of current events, whilst others will shield them as much as they can. When it comes to teenagers, we should leave it up to their own preference, but if they do want to know more, then it is vital that we are honest in describing the given situation.

6. Support other positive relationships

For many reasons, parents may not be the people in whom a teenager will confide when problems arise. Therefore, the importance for a teenager to be exposed to other caring adults they can trust cannot be overemphasised. If your teen is struggling with what is going on in the world then encourage them to reach out to someone they feel comfortable with, a teacher, mentor, family friend etc.

7. JTeen

Sometimes a teen will not want to expose their feelings to people they know. The fear of being judged is too great. Encourage them to contact Jteen- an anonymous and confidential text helpline where volunteer counsellors and therapists will help your teen process their difficult thoughts and emotions.

8. Seeking help

It's essential to seek professional help if your teen is showing some of the signs and symptoms of trauma, anxiety or depression. Depending on the available resources and how long it takes to set up an initial appointment, schedule an assessment for your teen with a GP or mental health professional who specialise in helping teenagers.





CONFLICT RESOLUTION

– Aryeh Sampson



Aryeh Sampson is a psychotherapist working in North London and online. He has a youtube channel 'Aryeh Sampson' and has authored 'Go To Yourself - transformation through Jewish wisdom and psychology'. For a free pdf copy of the book, email aryeh.sampson@gmail.com and for information about his counselling, see <https://ascounsellinginnorthlondon.co.uk>

Complaints that are expressed in a destructive fashion, such as an attack on someone's character, lead to a destructive cycle of defensive responses and lashing out. This leaves both people feeling ashamed, disliked and defective – which is devastating to the health of a relationship.

There are other styles of communication that can also be harmful. One is the avoidance of communication, in which a person tries to avoid discussing difficult issues. Another is passive aggressive behaviour, in which the expression of dissatisfaction or anger is not openly stated but expressed in an indirect and covert manner. Examples of this are keeping someone waiting, forgetting to do what someone has asked, or making subtle digs or sarcastic comments.

Communicating one's feelings in an open, non-confrontational way is an important skill. It is also correct to express feelings of resentment rather than bottling them up, and to do so with sensitivity. Below are some approaches that can be useful in enhancing communication.

1) Start in a positive way.

Dr. M. Wikler, marriage counsellor and author, explains that it is important to pick the right time to communicate difficult feelings, when one is calm and collected, not in a time of upset. It is also good to start in a positive way, for instance by acknowledging the other person's point of view or apologising for that which you may have done incorrectly

2) Don't blame or label

The psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott recommended that the best formulation for expressing criticism is XYZ – When you did X, it made me feel Y, and I'd rather you did Z instead. For example: 'When you didn't call to say that you would be late for supper, I felt unappreciated; I wish you would call to let me know when you'll be late in the future.' This approach avoids labelling, identifying the person with the mistake, and just focuses on the person's behaviour. It also avoids the tendency to blame, by using the expression 'I feel,' as opposed to 'You are.' And it focuses on making a request as opposed to a demand, such as 'Never do that again.'

3) Use non-defensive listening.

Imago therapy, an approach for strengthening marital harmony, stresses the importance of non-defensive

listening. The listener mirrors – repeats back – the statement they have heard. For example, 'What you are saying is that you are upset when I don't call to let you know I am going to be late, and this makes you feel unappreciated.' This allows the speaker to feel understood and validates their feelings. The other person then has an opportunity to reply using 'I' statements, which are in turn repeated back to him. This methodology helps both parties to understand each other and air out their difficulties without making each other defensive. Solutions can then be found.

4) Resolve the influence of the past.

Sometimes arguments are rooted in 'unfinished business,' unresolved relationships with other people from the past. Negative feelings towards these people are transferred onto a current relationship. For example, someone who feels they did not live up to parental expectations may react with anger at the slightest hint of not living up to what is expected of him by his spouse. The anger or hurt arises from a difficulty in the relationship with their parents, but it is expressed to the spouse. It is important to work on resolving the underlying problematic relationship, which in turn helps to stop the transference occurring. At times this can be done with the help of a therapist, where a client may express his unresolved or repressed feelings in the confidential and safe setting that therapy provides.



FIXATED ON FAULTS

– Rabbi Zvi Gefen



Rabbi Zvi Gefen is the Director of the Aish Manchester Branch, teaching in schools, campuses and a regular guest speaker throughout the Manchester community. His charm and teaching style has allowed him to shine and spread Jewish wisdom to hundreds of students, young families and the community at large. Alongside his wife, he has helped tens of couples to the Chuppah.



A husband and wife are getting ready to go to sleep. The wife is ready to close her eyes but her husband is standing and staring at himself in the full-length mirror. "What's the matter with you?" she says. "Come to sleep already." He turns to her and says, "Look at this, I am so depressed. All I see is a receding hairline, a growing gut, and wrinkles under my eyes and what hair I have left is grey. Tell me something positive, something uplifting so I can go to sleep." She thinks for a moment and says, "Well the good news is that your vision is still 20/20."

In a now famous TED Talk titled "How to speak so that people will want to listen," Julian Treasure lists the habits one needs to move away from and the direction in which one needs to move towards.

If I had to sum up the first part of the presentation, it would be to stay away from gossiping about others, judging others, and generally being negative. He tells the following joke: In the last years of her life, my mother became very negative. One day I said to her "It's October 1st today" and she said, "I know, isn't it dreadful?"

How is this connected to the theme of "clean speech"?

The Maharal teaches us that the issue with Lashon Hara extends beyond the words spoken about others; it lies in our tendency to fixate on their faults

To illustrate this concept further, Rabbeinu Yonah tells a story about a wise man who was walking through the street with several of his students. They came upon a dead dog. "What a foul odour," they remarked. The wise man said, "Look how white its teeth are!" With those words, the mentor taught his students that even when there is much more which is negative, there is still something positive to discover.

The Sefer Chassidim writes that there's no Jew who doesn't have a "pocket full of money" - he means in the spiritual sense. **Each individual possesses unique virtues and merits**, even if they may be concealed, much like treasures tucked away in a pocket.

Rather than hastily labelling someone based on their shortcomings, we ought to focus on their qualities and strengths. Our thoughts shape our words, and by

recognizing the positive in others, we contribute to a more compassionate and uplifting personal self.

Taking this understanding a step further, we can learn to see shortcomings from a broader perspective. When we experience a bad day, we tend to attribute it to factors like lack of sleep or relationship troubles, understanding and forgiving ourselves. It is similarly crucial to extend this understanding to others. We must recognize that every person is inherently good, striving to navigate their own challenges and flaws, just as we are.

According to the Rebbe, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk, the meaning of **וְאִתְּכֶם לִרְעוּ כְּמוֹן** is that just as we see our own virtues and try to overlook our shortcomings, we should adopt the same perspective toward others. We should focus on the positive aspects and qualities we love about them, just as we do for ourselves.

In the famous words of the Noam Elimelech:

**אֲדַרְבֶּה, תֵּן בְּלִבְנוֹ שְׂנֵאָה כָּל
אֶחָד מֵעֵלֵת חֲבֵרֵינוּ וְלֹא חֲסִרוֹנָם.**

**"On the contrary, let us develop
in our hearts the ability to see
the virtues of our friends and not
their deficiencies."**

With developing that vision of others and that mindset, we can begin to think differently about others and as a result, our way of speech changes, and we become greater people.

JEWISH CHAPLAINS ON UK UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES:

HARNESSING THE POWER OF SPEECH FOR SUPPORT & COMBATING ANTISEMITISM



– Sophie Dunoff

Sophie Dunoff is the Chief Executive Officer for University Jewish Chaplaincy, the premier Jewish organisation on campuses across the UK working with Jewish students and universities to enhance the Jewish student experience and safeguard Jewish life on campus.



University campuses serve as diverse ecosystems of ideas, cultures, and beliefs. Within this context, the role of Jewish Chaplains on UK university campuses holds immense significance. These dedicated individuals not only provide spiritual guidance but also play a pivotal role in increasing inclusivity, supporting students in crisis, and combating the harmful effects of verbal antisemitism. In this article, we will explore the power of speech and language, examining how words can be used both for harm and for good within the work of Jewish Chaplains.

Fostering Inclusivity and Support

Jewish Chaplains act as a beacon of hope and support for Jewish students navigating their way through their university experience. By employing positive and inclusive language, they create a welcoming environment that embraces diversity. Inclusivity goes beyond mere tolerance; it involves actively valuing and celebrating the richness that each student brings to the community. Jewish Chaplains utilise their linguistic skills to ensure that their words convey warmth, acceptance, and understanding.

Reaching Out to Students in Crisis

University life can be challenging, and students often face personal crises such as mental health issues, relationship problems, and/or academic stress. Jewish Chaplains are adept at recognizing when students are in need and offer compassionate support through their words. Whether it is providing a listening ear, offering guidance, or referring students to appropriate resources, chaplains utilise their language skills to communicate empathy, comfort, and encouragement. By employing affirming language, they help students feel seen, heard, and supported during difficult times.

Combating Verbal Antisemitism

Unfortunately, verbal antisemitism continues to be a pervasive issue, even on university campuses. Jewish chaplains play a crucial role in addressing and combating this form of discrimination. They engage in proactive educational initiatives, organising workshops and events that raise awareness about the history, culture, and contributions of the Jewish community. Chaplains challenge stereotypes and prejudices, promoting understanding and respect among diverse groups of students. Through their language, they empower Jewish students and allies to stand up against antisemitism and create a safer, more inclusive campus environment.

Educational Advocacy

In addition to supporting individual students, Jewish Chaplains also engage in broader educational advocacy. They collaborate with university administrations to develop policies and initiatives that promote religious tolerance and inclusivity. Chaplains articulate the importance of religious diversity and dialogue, advocating for the inclusion of Jewish perspectives within the academic curriculum. By harnessing the power of language, Chaplains effectively communicate the value of embracing different faiths and cultures, fostering an environment where all students can thrive.

Community Engagement and Dialogue

Jewish Chaplains actively encourage dialogue and build connections between students of different backgrounds. They organise interfaith events, dialogues, and cultural celebrations to facilitate meaningful conversations and create mutual understanding. By encouraging respectful discourse, Chaplains ensure that words are used constructively, enabling students to learn from one another and challenge preconceived notions. Through their linguistic skills, they create spaces where individuals can engage in open and honest conversations, forging bonds that transcend cultural and religious boundaries.

The work of Jewish Chaplains on UK university campuses is essential in promoting inclusivity, combating antisemitism, and providing support to students in need. By harnessing the power of speech and language, these Chaplains create environments where words can be used for good. Through their affirmative language, they increase inclusivity and offer crucial support to students facing personal crises. By engaging in educational advocacy and community engagement, Chaplains combat verbal antisemitism and promote dialogue among diverse groups. The influence of Jewish Chaplains extends beyond their immediate role, positively impacting the entire university community. Through their dedication to fostering inclusivity, combating discrimination, and utilising the power of language, these Chaplains help create a campus environment where all students can thrive, regardless of their religious or cultural backgrounds. By recognizing the potential harm of words and actively working to promote understanding and respect, Jewish Chaplains serve as catalysts for positive change, making a lasting impact on UK university campuses and beyond.

CLASSIC

MISCOMMUNICATIONS

– Editorial Team



Whenever there is communication, the possibility of miscommunication exists. The gift of communication is a deep conveying of fact or feeling. The gaff of miscommunication is where it all goes wrong. Just as communication can create shockwaves and impact (think of impactful speeches, phrases repeated over history), miscommunication can also create its own waves. In a mix of Jewish and historical events, there have been some major and minor events where ‘I didn’t quite mean for my words to end up like that.’

1. The fall of the Berlin Wall

In 1989, an East German Communist official made a mistake that would go down in history. Though the Cold War was long thawing, East and West Germany were still split between the Soviets and the West, with little or no travel between them. The Iron Curtain had split families and trapped millions, granting them no free movement; the symbol of which was the Berlin Wall which divided the city. Yet in the words of one newspaper:

‘At an otherwise dull news conference on 9 November 1989, Schabowski, a member of the Soviet bloc state’s ruling Politburo, was asked by a journalist about current travel rules. For months, pressure had been building on the East German government to grant its citizens the freedom to travel to the west, and a clearly underprepared Schabowski stunned the journalists present with his answer. He haltingly said: “Therefore, we have decided today to implement a regulation that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave East Germany through any of the border crossings.” He was then asked when the new rule would take effect. “According to my information ... immediately, without delay,” he answered, shuffling through the papers spread in front of him as he searched in vain for clarifying information.’

Those few words caused a scramble of cross-city travel and the historic wall – that symbol of segregation – to come down.

In the words of the New York Times: *We now know that Mr. Schabowski was largely oblivious to the earthquake his words had caused. In fact, he had returned from a*

short vacation that very day. He didn’t know that the new rules were supposed to take effect the next day, Nov. 10 — subject to all sorts of fine print, including the requirement to obtain visas. East Germans didn’t know about these limits either. All they knew was what they had just heard on radio and TV. Thanks to Mr. Schabowski, they thought they were free to go.

2. Mr Ratner

Gerald Ratner inherited his father’s jewellery business in 1984, and took only six years to create a multimillion dollar empire. But what took years to build took seconds to destroy. He was invited as a guest speaker at the Institute of Directors on April 23 1991. He was giving a speech that was attended by 6000 listeners. Yet the next two sentences were the undoing of the entire empire (please excuse the language): *How can you sell this for such a low price?* “I say, “*Because it’s total crap.*” To make sure that he really did an excellent job of it, he also stated that his company: *sold a pair of earrings for under a pound, which is cheaper than a shrimp sandwich from Marks and Spencer, but probably wouldn’t last as long.* The company lost £500 million in days and had to rename themselves.

3. Chet Ha’egel

It feels odd to include one of the nation’s greatest sins in the same list as jewellery and the Berlin Wall, but the sin of the golden calf was effectively precipitated by a misunderstanding in communication. Moshe had told the people he would return from being atop Har Sinai after forty days. The people calculated that forty days had now passed and what followed was the idolatrous golden calf. In fact, **the world’s first sin was also a part-product of misrepresented communication;** Hashem had told Adam not to eat from the tree – Adam then reported to Chavah not to touch the tree. The serpent pounced on this communication chasm and caused Chavah to sin, arguing ‘Just like there’s no punishment to touch the tree, there is no punishment to eat from the tree either.’

4. Communication that didn’t happen...

Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda was an intelligence officer with the Imperial Japanese Army who had been sent to the island of Lubang in 1944 to hinder an Allied invasion expected to take place in early 1945. He was a persistent

fighter, to the point that he kept on fighting...until 1974! Lieutenant Onoda was still stubbornly fighting the Second World War nearly thirty years after everyone else had put down their arms. Why? Because he had not received orders from his superior officer to stop the war! They had to fly Major Yoshimi Taniguchi, by then a quiet bookseller, to the Philippines in the 70s, to order Onoda to stop!

5. The prank call

This is my favourite story of unexpected communication, it was told to me by Rabbi Dovid Roberts. This story involved the leading Rabbi of the 20th century, Rav Moshe Feinstein, who passed away in 1986.

The story is told of two Jewish teenagers in New York who decided to do something mischievous. They decided to call Rav Moshe Feinstein very late one night. Assuming it was a matter of urgency, Rav Moshe was handed the phone, but quickly realised that the boys had nothing real to ask and were just playing a prank. **But rather than becoming annoyed or hanging up the phone, Rav Moshe saw this as an opportunity.** He asked one of the boys which Gemara they were learning in high school, and then for the exact page – and proceeded to study the page together on the phone for over 30 minutes. Rav Moshe ended the conversation by feeding the boy a question he had on that passage of Gemara, and told the boy to ask it to his Rabbi the next day. The next day, the school Rabbi began teaching his class as usual, but noticed that the two normally disruptive boys were uncharacteristically attentive and well-behaved. When the time came, one of the boys raised his hand and asked the question he had been told the night before. Stunned at the excellence of the question, the school Rabbi asked the boy where he had got such a good question from. ‘Simple,’ said the boy. ‘My *chavrusa* (learning partner) told it to me at about midnight last night.’ The Rabbi was aghast with joy – this was the last boy in the class he expected to be learning outside of school hours, let alone at midnight! ‘Who did you learn with last night?’ the Rabbi asked. And the boy beamed: ‘with Rav Moshe Feinstein!’ Rav Moshe had changed a boy’s life and attitude to Torah study with compassion and a willingness to help.





THE KEYS TO THEIR GREATNESS

– Rabbi MC Lister



Rabbi MC Lister is on the Bushey Rabbinic team – a wonderful talent. He was born in Jerusalem, Israel and attended Menorah Primary School and Hasmonean High School. On leaving school he moved to Jerusalem to study in Yeshivas Baïs Yisroel, then attained semicha at the Jerusalem Kollel under the auspices of Rabbi Yitzchok Berkovits.

I'm going to be honest with you: by the time Parshas Tetzaveh rolls round, the fun has definitely died down. We have just finished months of enthralling narratives; miracles of barely conceivable magnitude, tales of rags to riches and suffering to redemption. Then, the Torah turns to the building of the Tabernacle. This part of the Torah is technical, often repetitive and is something that so many sit through with an air of resigned disinterest.

But.

The construction of the clothes of the priests, one of the last places we would expect to be inspired, contains a story which can begin to change lives. Exodus 28:2-3 tells us that God instructs Moshe: "You shall make clothes of sanctity for Aharon your brother...and you shall speak to all the wise hearted people whom I have invested with the spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the clothing of Aharon [the high priest] to induct him to serve Me...".

*I know right. Mind blowing.
Bear with me.*

What comes to mind when we try to picture this scene? In the verse as it stands, we imagine Moshe making an announcement with (the 13th century BCE equivalent of) a megaphone, asking all wise hearted people to please report to him for 'priestly-clothing-building' duty.

Rabbi Moshe Schreiber (Chasam Sofer, 1762-1839) says that while this is definitely the common translation of this verse, it's a mistake. The verse should be understood as follows:

"Tell all the wise hearted people that I have filled them with the spirit of wisdom."

This small change in wording depicts a radically different scene.

Imagine. You're a hitherto unremarkable Jewish person minding their own business in their tent until there is a knock at the... flap(?). A family member runs over to you and says there's someone who wants to speak to you. You ask who it is, and they tell you, slightly breathlessly, that it's Moshe. 'Like the 'leader of the Jewish people' Moshe?' you ask. A wordless nod. Now you're absolutely petrified. Have you done anything wrong? Maybe there was something you forgot to do? You force yourself to the entrance and, indeed, this isn't a joke. There he is. Moshe, the one who brought the plagues upon Egypt. Moshe who split the sea, and who speaks face to face with G-d.

*Waiting.
For you.*

And then Moshe in all his greatness and majesty tells you: "God has filled you with a wisdom and skillset that you don't know you have. "Please come with me," he says, "I need you to help me build the clothes for the priests."

We can barely imagine what that must have been like. One thing we know for sure; that one conversation would have changed your life forever.

Sadly, we have no priestly garments that need building today. But this conversation that happened all those years ago, between Moshe and an average Jew has a crucial relevance today.

We may see talented and potential-filled people wherever we look. But that which seems so obvious to us as an onlooker, may be a complete surprise to the person in question. Much like Moshe was commanded all those years ago, consider going over to these people and telling them, in a gentle way, how gifted they are. With one small conversation, you may just unlock the greatness within them that they never knew they had. Whether it's a child, spouse, student, friend or neighbour, go over and give them the news - they are talented, gifted and can achieve so much more than they know. It's one small sentence that can change them forever.

CLEAN SPEECH IN THE CITY

The below piece is a write-up of a Clean Speech Conference at Ernst & Young, produced by Rosie Boardman of Ernst & Young. In May 2023, Ernst & Young hosted sessions for groups of sixth form students in their Manchester and London offices, all about speech in the workplace.

Martin Portnoy is a Partner at Ernst & Young, Jo Hurley is a Director at Ernst & Young, Rosie Boardman is a Private Client Tax Manager at Ernst & Young.



Last week Martin and Jo hosted “communication” sessions in Manchester and London for local sixth form students. This was in joint collaboration with The Clean Speech Project UK, and the charities GIFT and Seed. In a world in which speech and communication are used far too often as a platform for divisiveness, the goal of The Clean Speech Project is to promote positive speech and the avoidance of negative speech.

During the sessions, we discussed how to provide constructive feedback effectively, for example, by framing a mistake as a growth opportunity to ensure no negativity, as well as how to respond to unfair criticism, and the benefit of face to face discussions and taking a step back before communicating. We also came up with examples of how communication can be misconstrued, including statements such as “this work needs to be finished by tomorrow” or “this was not up to the standard expected” and how we should work on being as clear as possible ourselves, as well as clarifying statements we don’t fully understand. We discussed the different forms of body language and how, given the reduced frequency of face to face meetings, we work around this reality to replicate the benefits of in-person conversation over calls or video calls. Finally, we had a role play session to outline how we would communicate with and encourage a negative team member, which involved seeking help and communicating a longer term plan to keep everyone on track.

Some feedback from the students included the following:

"I was blown away by the magnitude of EY, and learnt how to use different communication models in different circumstances."

"I learnt the importance of open communication with all in the workplace, and the importance of not being intimidated by those who are higher up than me."

The sessions were organised by Rosie Boardman and Thomas Davis.

In Jo’s words:

Last week EY’s Private Capital team hosted a “clean speech” session in Manchester and London for local sixth form students. This was in joint collaboration with The Clean Speech Project UK, and the charities GIFT and Seed. In a world in which speech and communication are far too often a platform for divisiveness, the goal of The Clean Speech Project is to promote constructive speech and the avoidance of negative speech.

These were fantastic sessions – thought provoking for both the EY team and students alike. It was great to hear some of the positive feedback from the students – particularly “I was blown away by the magnitude of EY, and learnt how to use different communication models in different circumstances” and “I learnt the importance of open communication with all in the workplace, and the importance of not being intimidated by those who are higher up than me.”

Thank you to The Clean Speech Project UK, and charities GIFT and Seed for asking us to be part of this brilliant initiative.

THE GIVING MOUNTAIN

– Rabbi Sandor Milun,
GIFT Managing Director



Originally from South Africa, Rabbi Sandor is a former black-belt in judo at the Maccabi Games. He's previously worked for JEM and JLE and is now the Managing Director of GIFT.

Within days of walking on Kilimanjaro, the entire group recognised very clearly that no one would make it up by oneself. Even more than the physical strain that comes from walking 44,000 steps in one day, the mental and emotional strain would be equal if not more than the physical effort needed to summit Africa's highest peak.

Words; positive words were the best medicine for all, especially when people began to struggle. All of us were in the same situation, encouragement and positivity was the only way we'd be able to continue. Something strange began to happen, as the days rolled into each other, we'd be offering our assistance more and more – be it physically, and more so emotionally; the words became the energy force that pushed us upwards towards the summit.

On summit night, a few people fell behind the pack. One person decided to quit just 140m lower than the summit. A mere fifty minute walk became an insurmountable precipice that was just too much to contemplate.

I was already at the summit, using our walkie talkies, I asked the medic if this person was capable of carrying on. She confirmed that health-wise she was. I then asked if this person was listening, and indeed they were. I realised I had one shot at this, "You've come so far, you have achieved so much, in such difficult circumstances. There is NO way you can give up now. You CAN do this! I will wait for you and we will celebrate together!"

Just forty-five minutes later, this person reached the summit and achieved something beyond their wildest dreams. They did it!

The power of speech – it can make us, it can break us. It can inspire us to go way beyond what we think is possible. Words both spoken and unspoken are so powerful, they can change lives... forever.



MINDFUL MARKETING:

A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH TO ATTRACT & RETAIN CONSUMERS

– Anabelle Davidovici



As a 25-year-old mother and wife, Anabelle is passionate about her Judaism, helping others and most importantly, being there for her loved ones. Born in Manhattan and having moved to the South of France at a young age, she is fluent in both English and French. After majoring in Digital Marketing and Brand Management, she has experience in education, public relations as well as brand management and adores music and cooking. Anabelle also manages an online gallery of Caribbean art!

Starting a business can be a daunting task, but with the appropriate strategy, it can be a rewarding experience.

If you have an innovative business idea but you are unsure of how you should present it to the world, the first step is to show what you're selling in a visual, creative and most importantly, a positive way. This can be achieved through efficient branding, copywriting and digital marketing.

It is essential to apply positive and respectful messaging, especially in the non-profit world. To that effect, here are a number of guidelines to consider when establishing your brand messaging.

Branding

Branding is the process of creating a unique identity for your brand. It involves creating a logo, choosing a colour scheme, and developing a brand voice. A strong brand identity can help you differentiate your business from the competition and build trust with your customers.

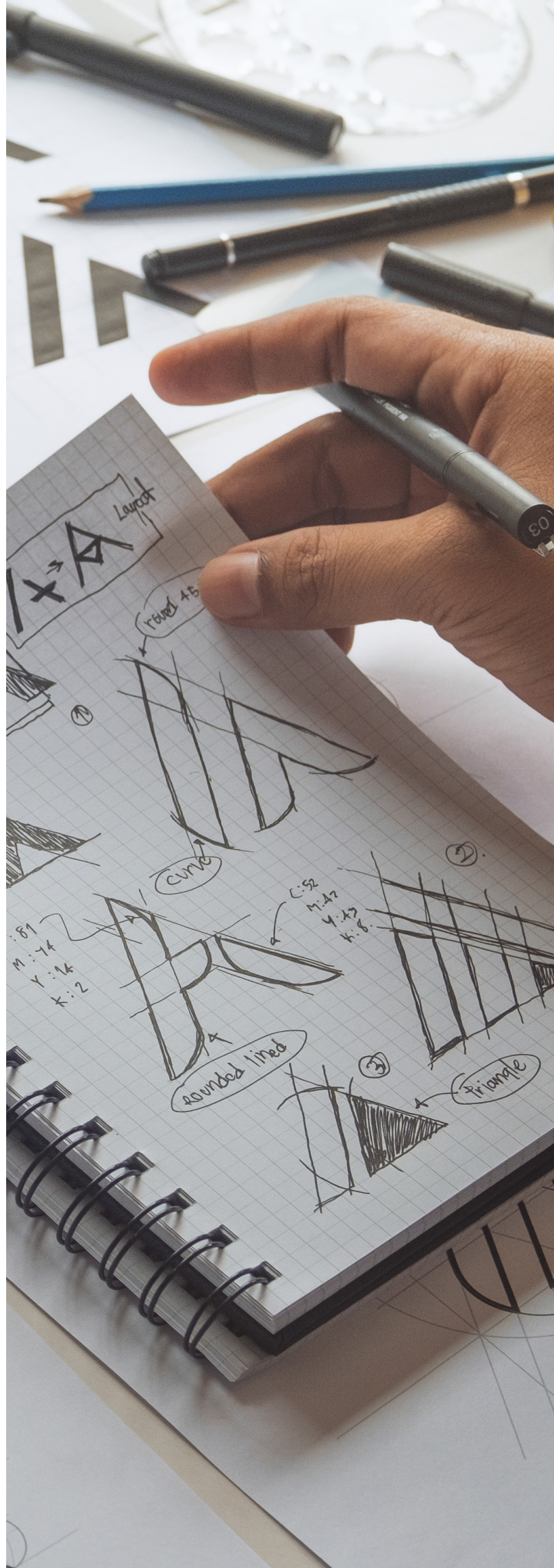
Using mindful speech¹ is a key factor in developing your brand voice. Do not cause harm to fellow non-profits or businesses by belittling the impact of their product or service to your advantage.²

An impactful brand has its own identity representing its style, values and products, as well as the voice of the brand. Brand identity starts with an inventive name and logo which should become identifiable with time. The aim is for the consumer to refer to your brand when having a particular service or product in mind.

A strong brand identity includes a consistent graphics style, typography and brand colours. Keeping these details consistent will form the reliability and notability of your brand.

Marketing

Identifying your target market is an essential part of your branding strategy. Once you've decided which demographic you'd like to target, narrowing down the finer details of your product or service becomes a simpler task.



Be sensitive to your audience and adopt an inclusive strategy as opposed to an exclusive one at the expense of others' feelings.³ Do not discriminate against those with differences. Differences can include disabilities, a different skin colour, religion or ethnicity. Be mindful of the diverse communities and cultures. Stereotypes should be prohibited.

Creating compelling content will engage your audience and persuade them to take action. A well-written copy can help you communicate your brand's message and values effectively. Incorporating social good into your brand's marketing can also establish your brand's personality even further.

Educate Consumers through Storytelling

Now, who doesn't love a good story?

A product is most appealing when you see the authenticity behind its story and production process. Aim for a heart-warming scenario, personal experience or creative storyline.

A good story-telling campaign must be creative, communicate key messages of your brand and emit positivity. Use your story-telling as an opportunity to boost your brand and not belittle others.

Do not scare people into consuming your product or service. Use a positive approach and emphasise the benefits and attributes of your organisation to attract clientele, volunteers or new donors.

Remain humble whilst sharing the greatest attributes of your brand in the most ethical and authentic way possible. Your audience should feel connected, empowered to make the right decision and able to participate in your brand's life.

By using methodical and authentic marketing practices,⁴ you can create a strong brand identity for your business that will attract and retain customers. It is essential that we take into consideration how our marketing choices affect others. We are responsible for the use of our products, their origins and fundamentally, ensuring the well-being of others.

My experience with GIFT this past year has taught me one very fulfilling and impactful lesson: the importance of making a world a better place⁵ by giving our time to others. Their charitable work and long line of volunteers do not go unnoticed. All ages are inspired to give and their relatable, warm and caring content has encouraged this mindset.

¹ Mindful Speech p.5 Clean Speech Study book

² This Year vs. Last Year p.9 Clean Speech Study book

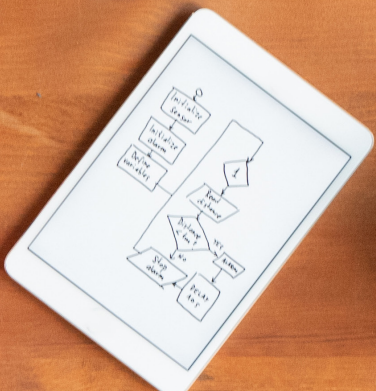
³ Special Sensibilities p.11 Clean Speech Study book

⁴ My Way p.36-37 Clean Speech Study book

⁵ The Little White Lie p.48-49 Clean Speech Study book



LOGO



LESSONS FROM MY PHYSIO

– Rav Dov Ber Cowan



Rabbi Dov Cowan is a senior educator at the JLE. He is also the creator of Soul Fitness, a project that was born from the hundreds of conversations with parents, students and teachers over the past ten years and whose meditation recordings have had over 11,000 worldwide listeners. Rabbi Dov is also a musician, mental health counsellor and forest-bathing instructor.

A few days ago I was seeing my physiotherapist, describing an issue with an acutely painful shoulder injury. “To say it simply,” I told the physio, in a tone that carried the frustration of weeks of limited manoeuvrability, “my shoulder is totally messed up.”

And he stopped me in my tracks.

Yes I’m the Rabbi and he’s the medical professional but this time the tables were turned as he sat me down for a “mussar” lesson about the power of words. “Rabbi, if you say the shoulder is messed up, it will be messed up. Think about how you see yourself and how you see your abilities. If you tell yourself a story then don’t be surprised if there is a self-fulfilled prophecy.”

He was so right.

I would have said “lesson learnt” but the truth is that this was a lesson that I always knew beyond doubt, namely, that we build our reality through our speech. Human words are the vehicle that take our spiritual inner world and unite it with the physical.

The more that we use certain words to express who we are and what we are feeling, the more those words crystallise and build our perception of our reality.

As King Solomon expressed in the book of Proverbs: *“Death and life are in the hands of the tongue, and whoever loves either will eat of its fruit”* (Proverbs 18:21). The words that we choose have immense power, to destroy, break and feed negativity.

On the other side, we can use our power of speech to build our faith and to make G-d’s presence more of a reality in our lives. I once heard a profound teaching from the Nesivos Shalom (the previous Rebbe of the Slonim Chassidic dynasty) based on the words of Psalms that we recite as part of Hallel: *הֵאֱמַנְתִּי כִּי אֲדַבֵּר* literally translated as “I believed because I spoke.” King David is telling us a very powerful lesson. The more that I use my words to thank Hashem by saying Baruch Hashem (*Thank G-d*) when talking about the good in my life or to recognise that He is in charge of the success of my day to day life by saying Im Yirtzeh Hashem (*If G-d wills it*) before stating my plans or personal goals for the day, the more I will strengthen my belief and deepen my awareness of the Creator’s presence in my life.

So what I really should have told my physio was “lesson remembered” since the fact that we create our worlds with our words was something I already knew well. It might seem quite insignificant to my health to say that a part of me is *messed up* but the truth is that by simply speaking out these words I am confirming my emotions and feelings and thus firming the actual physical reality that I am contending with. And so, I thanked my physio, as a helpful reminder never goes amiss – and you’ll be pleased to know that my shoulder is feeling much better!





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