

Pesach 5784 / 2024

PESACH MESSAGE 5784

Among the most dramatic moments in all of Jewish history is the point at which the Children of Israel found themselves caught between their Egyptian pursuers and the deep blue sea.

After hundreds of years of bitter slavery, freedom finally seemed within reach. But, as our ancestors stood on the shoreline, with the Egyptian army bearing down upon them, their fate hung agonisingly in the balance. What followed was an astonishing exchange between Moses and the Almighty.

Moses characteristically prostrated himself upon the earth and cried out to Hashem for help. He could never have imagined what the response would be:

"Why are you crying to me. Speak to the Children of Israel and let them travel!"

The message of this astonishing admonition is clear: There is a time for prayer and a time for action, and we must never rely upon one to the exclusion of the other. Rashi teaches that it was precisely this lesson which Moses had in mind when he restricted his prayer for the well-being of his sister, Miriam, to the shortest Biblical prayer on record: "God please, heal her please". He knew that at that moment, his words needed to be accompanied by action.

This was one of the central lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic, when we recognised that our Bitachon – trust that Hashem will be there for us in our hour of need, must be accompanied by Hishtadlut - our own efforts towards achieving our goals.

Our sages capture this principle in the Rabbinic aphorism: 'You should never rely on a miracle'.

Since the 7th October, we have been united in prayer. Additional Psalms and special supplications continue to be recited in Shuls around the world. We hold every single innocent victim of this awful conflict in our hearts and pray with every fibre of our being for peace, security and the return of all hostages.

Yet, we must also hear the echo of Hashem's words to Moses: "Why are you crying to me?"

This is also a time for action.

Whenever it has seemed that our community's capacity to stand against the torrent of hatred directed against Jews and the State of Israel might reach breaking point, I have been reminded by so many of you that in fact, our collective resolve knows no bounds.

From vigils to solidarity visits, media campaigns and local activism – British Jews have made clear that we will not rest while our people are under attack, whether at home or in Israel.

Sadly, our work is not yet done. And as we celebrate the festival of our freedom, we are reminded that throughout our history, with the help of Hashem, we have prevailed.

May we continue to be Hashem's partners in bringing peace and security to all of His people.

Valerie and I wish you Chag Kasher Vesameach,



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE

