



## Speech



### Aims:

- 1) To appreciate that speech is the essence of human beings and is what makes us different from animals.
- 2) To understand that both Hashem and man create by using speech.
- 3) To realise that speech is a hugely positive thing if used correctly.
- 4) To discourage swearing in Bnei Akiva.



Dear Madrichim

I hope that all of your Sukkah Crawls were a huge success and that you had a happy and meaningful Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah!

This week's Choveret is about the power of speech, focussing specifically on the positive potential of speech rather than the negative. As there was no new Choveret last Shabbat, I have chosen a theme that links in both to Parashat Bereishit (last week) and Parashat Noach (this week).

Again I have kept the Choveret to only 8 pages so that it is easy to absorb and to use in planning your meetings. Please use both the educational content and the activity section as you prepare for Shabbat.

Finally, I have introduced a new section on the last page called 'Parasha in Pictures' which gives you a fun and friendly overview of the weekly Parasha. This week I have included Parashat Bereishit as well as Parashat Noach as it is good to start 'In the beginning'. Please take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to remind your Chanichim that we have just started reading the Torah again and to discuss the many exciting stories that take place in Bereishit and Noach.

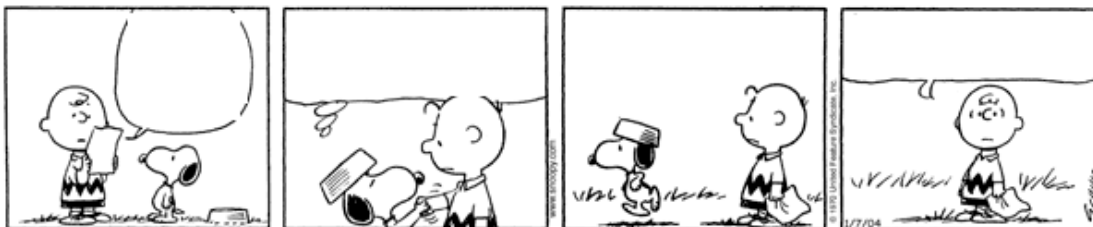
Have a wonderful Shabbat, enjoy Sviva, and make sure your Chanichim enjoy it too!

All the best

Alan

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## What would life be like without the ability to speak, read or write? Imagine a life without words...



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.... doesn't make much sense does it.

*In all Snoopy cartoons Snoopy never actually speaks and just thinks. The same is true of Gromit, who has a completely silent role throughout Wallace and Gromit.*



## Bereshit 2:7

“*VaYipach B'Apav Nishmat Chaim, VaYehi HaAdam L'Nefesh Chaya.*”

“And He breathed into his nostrils a soul of life, and man became a living being.”

The Targum Unkelos (the earliest official Aramaic translation of the Torah) translates “*Nefesh Chaya*” as “*Ruach Memalella*” – “speaking spirit”. Being a **living being** is synonymous with the **ability to speak**. Rashi, commenting on this Pasuk, cites the power of speech as the unique designation of a human being. Speech differentiates us from animals.

That is the difference between Wallace and Gromit. Wallace can speak, Gromit cannot.

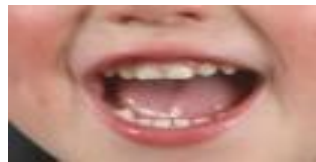
The Kuzari lists the different things found in the world as follows:

**Domem** – inanimate objects

**Tzomeach** – plant life

**Chai** – animal life

**M'Daber** – speakers, i.e. human beings



Similarly, in the first Mishna of Bava Kamma, man is defined as “*Mav'eh*”, which means “expression” or “request”. The idea is the same as above. It is with speech that man fulfills his role in creation, so much so that no name more aptly describes him than ‘M'Daber’ (speaker).

While human life is best described as one of speech, death is referred to as silence.

“*Lo HaMeitim Yehallelu Kah, VeLo Kol Yordei Dumah*” - “The dead do not praise Hashem, nor do all those who descend to the grave”. (Tehillim, 115:17) The word ‘dumah’ means grave and it means silence.

## Why is speech so important?

It is through words that man expresses his inner self. Speech actualises his potential, giving life to dormant thoughts. Man's body is just another physical entity, a *walking piece of meat*. He alone has the ability to revive his flesh, with the words that give meaning and direction to his life.

We see in Bereshit that man is created “*Betzelem Elokim*” in the image of Hashem. In every human being there is a little spark of the Divine. Part of this spark is the power of speech.

Hashem created the world through speech. “*Baruch She'Amar V'Hayah HaOlam*” “Blessed is the one who spoke and the world came into existence.”

In Pirkei Avot we explain in more detail how, “*B'Asarah Ma'amarot Nivra HaOlam*” “with 10 statements the world was created.” Just as Hashem creates with speech, so must man create with speech.

Often we focus on the negative aspects of speech like Lashon Hara, but we ought to focus more on the positive dimension of speech. Rav Yehudah Amital ז"ל, said that the message of Lashon Hara is not that speech is bad and destructive and therefore every one should do a 'Taanit Dibbur' (a fast of speech, like a sponsored silence), but rather that we should use speech properly and constructively.

## Man in the Image of Hashem

**Hashem** creates with speech

**Man** creates with speech

### How does man create with speech?

Halacha is full of examples where man **creates** with speech.

- 1) **Kiddush** – sanctifying the Shabbat day and Yom Tov. If a person says that they are bringing in Shabbat early then they cannot do melacha from that point.
- 2) **Nedarim** – vows, if a person makes a promise to do something then it is as if there is a mitzvah on him to perform what he promised. In this respect a man's words are parallel to those of Hashem.
- 3) **Hekdesh** – speech sets aside animals as holy for Temple use.

*In all of these first three examples, man uses speech to **create** new halachic status.*

- 4) **Tefillah** – a person **creates** a relationship with Hashem through prayer.
- 5) **Talmud Torah** – a person **creates** chiddushim (new ideas) and a love for Torah by speaking Torah and learning out loud.

A joke can **create** a smile.

A quick hello can make someone feel special.

Great skyscrapers of love, harmony and happiness can be created by mere words.

This is the power of speech.

Of course there is the other side of the coin. Just as so much can be created through speech, so much can be destroyed through speech if it is abused.

**Some people use language to express thought, some to conceal thought, but most use it to replace thought.**

Without thinking properly about what we say, we can destroy those skyscrapers that we mentioned and cause lots of nasty problems.



One example in the Torah is the story of Migdal Bavel – the Tower of Babel. Every person in the entire world joined together to help build a tower reaching up to the heavens. The Torah describes their unity by saying that “all the earth was of one language and common purpose”.

However this unity disappears by the end of the Parasha, and we learn that Hashem “confused the language of all the earth and from there Hashem dispersed them over the face of the earth”.

Unity is a good thing, but in the same way that people can join together for the good, so too they can unite to do bad things. While it seems that it was their actions rather than their words that were the problem, the introduction emphasises that the main issue was their abuse of their ability to communicate with each other coherently. This is why their punishment was that they lost their ability to speak the same language, as they had abused their power of speech.

**So now we live in a world of many languages where we struggle to communicate with the vast majority of people in it!**

However, even within our social circles where we all speak the same language, we too often abuse our power of speech. One of the ways in which we do this is by swearing. This is a problem in Bnei Akiva and needs to be addressed at all levels of the Tnua – Mazkirut, Madrichim and Chanichim.

The Gemara in Pesachim 3a asks why the Torah, when describing non-kosher animals in Parashat Noach, says “animals which are not pure (eino tahara)”. If the Torah wishes not to waste its words it should say one word “Tameih” “impure” instead of the two words of “Eino Tahara” “not pure”. The reason why the Torah went out of its way to say the two words of “not pure” instead of “impure” is because it did not want to use the dirty word “impure” the clean language “not pure”. The message of this Gemara is that we should go out of our way to use clean language.

Is my vocabulary so limited that I need to use swear words in every other sentence? When I create with my speech, do I really want to build a building covered with mud and dirt?

As Pubillius Syrus (1st Century BCE Roman Writer) once said “Speech is the mirror of the soul; as a man speaks, so he is.”

## Activities

Don't forget that your Sviva has two incredible games booklets with tons of great suggestions for games and activities. Make sure to take advantage of them each week when you plan your meetings!

Here are just a few additional suggestions specifically for this week:



- Play Just a Minute to demonstrate how many different ways we can talk about the same things.
- Play Animal Adman to show that animals just make noises.
- Ask the Chanichim what the difference is between Wallace and Gromit and ask why they think speech is uniquely human.
- Draw out the Kuzari's 4 orders of creation (page 3) and get the Chanichim to put in order (this should hopefully get them to think about what the 4 mean)
- Split into 2 groups – one group acts out man creating a house by actions and hard work, the other acts out Hashem creating the world by speech and very little effort. Ask them if man ever creates with words, like Hashem.
- Split into pairs – Chanichim have to create something with their speech. After sharing their own ideas give out some of the halachot using speech for them to act out to everyone else.
- Play conscience to demonstrate that what someone says is not always what they mean.
- Play consequences where one person starts a sentence until they say the word “and” and then the next person continues the story – building with words.
- Write out phrases which have the same meaning but one contains a nice way of saying something and the other a less nice way – e.g. “Excuse me please” or “Get out of my way, you stupid fool!”
- Start the meeting by talking in a random language to confuse the Chanichim and to get them to think about the importance of language.
- Get the Chanichim to try to make up their own language from scratch and then have conversations with Chanichim from different groups.

And a bonus for Madrichim's meetings – have a swear box and donate the money to Tzedakah!



# Parasha in Pictures!

## Bereishit

“In the beginning Hashem created the  and the  ”

Chapter 1 – Hashem creates the entire world in 6 days

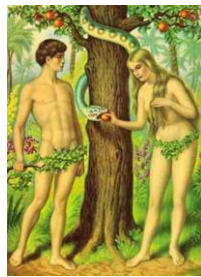
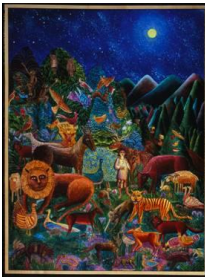
Chapter 2 – Hashem rests on the seventh day / we learn more details on creation of man and woman

Chapter 3 – Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge and get kicked out of Gan Eden

Chapter 4 – Kain and Abel are born and Kain kills Abel

Chapter 5 – 10 Generations between Adam and Noach are listed

Chapter 6 – The entire world has become corrupted and Hashem wants to destroy it



## Noach

“Make for yourself an  out of  ”

Chapter 6 – Noach is told to build an ark and save his family and some animals

Chapter 7 – The flood begins and lasts for 40 days destroying the whole world

Chapter 8 – The flood ends and the animals and Noach come out of the ark

Chapter 9 – Hashem promises never to send such a flood again through the rainbow covenant

Chapter 10 – The 70 nations descended from Noach are listed

Chapter 11 – The tower of Bavel / 10 generations from Noach to Avraham are listed



# Coming soon at Bnei Akiva!

## Limmud

Mondays at 19:30 at the London Bayit and at 18:00 in Birmingham.

Tuesdays at 19:30 at the Manchester Bayit and coming soon in Leeds.

For more information or to arrange a Chavruta email Alan at [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org)

## **8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> October: Shabbat Hadracha, Manchester**

An amazing Bnei Akiva Shabbat at the Manchester Bayit including leadership training sessions for all Sviva Madrichim run by Hadracha expert Ilan Frydman of World BA.

## **10<sup>th</sup> October: Hadracha Day, London**

An incredible opportunity for all Sviva Madrichim at the London Bayit including leadership training sessions run by Hadracha expert Ilan Frydman of World BA.

## **10<sup>th</sup> October: Family Event, Leeds**

An evening of fun for all the family with sessions for Chanichim, Madrichim and Parents from 18:30 followed by dinner and entertainment at 20:00.

## **15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> October: Shabbat Hachshara, Year 13**

A fantastic opportunity to find out about all of Bnei Akiva's gap year programmes in Israel while having one last fun Shabbat in England with all of your friends.

Shabbat Hachshara is in Woodside Park – book your place now by emailing Rafi at [Israel@bauk.org](mailto:Israel@bauk.org)

### **Other dates for your diary!**

29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October: Shabbat Bogrim, *University Students*

31<sup>st</sup> October: Israel Machane Reunion, *Year 12*

22<sup>nd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> December: Winter Machane (pre-camp for Madrichim from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>)

11<sup>th</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> August: Provisional dates for Israel Machane, *Year 11*