

Office of The CHIEF RABBI

The Chief Rabbi's Pesach Message 5782

For the past two years, our Pesach experiences have been uniquely challenging while we contended with the unprecedented restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic. Baruch Hashem, at long last, we can now look forward with fresh optimism to Pesach 2022.

The fundamental dimensions of the Pesach Seder are encapsulated perfectly in the famous words: "Kol dichfin yeitei veyeichol; kol ditzrich yeitei veyifsach" – "All who are hungry, let them come and eat; All who are in need, let them come and join us in observing Pesach."

This invitation makes clear that where possible, our Seder should be celebrated with others. Yet, it also describes the two essential aspects of the Seder experience – the physical, represented by the invitation to eat, and the spiritual, represented by the invitation to observe Pesach. Neither component is sufficient without the other. The Seder is both a feast for our physical senses and a feast for the soul.

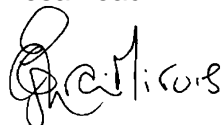
The four questions of Ma Nishtana, relating to matza, maror, dipping and leaning, highlight not only *what* we do at the seder but also *how* we do them. These two dimensions of both our physical and spiritual Seder experiences, convey to us a profound lesson about both Seder night and Jewish life in general.

Our Sedarim of 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented. The *what* was the same as it has been for centuries, as we proceeded from cover to cover of our Haggadot. But the *how* had one major difference, due to the severely restricted numbers around our tables. Now that, Baruch Hashem, we will hopefully be able to have Sedarim of pre-Covid proportions, within the timeless *what* of Seder night, let us not revert entirely to our previous *how*. Instead, let's enrich our Seder experience by introducing fresh and creative ways to excite and inspire children and adults alike.

Indeed, we must apply this principle to Jewish life more broadly. The Pandemic has caused an upheaval in our communal life that most of us have never previously experienced and that comes with an opportunity to reimagine it in new ways. This is the rationale behind Project Welcome, which will provide strategic support and dedicated funding to communities around the country as they think anew and take bold steps to reinvigorate our congregants. In this context, I have no doubt that ShabbatUK, which will this year take place on 13th/14th May, will provide an exciting platform for extraordinary community engagement, which will be appreciated all the more following successive periods of lockdown.

Fascinatingly, the Hebrew word for crisis is *mashber*. The original Biblical meaning of this word is 'the opening of the womb', the moment of greatest human potential, because out of crises we must always seek the opportunities for renewal and regeneration. Let us ensure that this Pesach marks the beginning of a new era of Jewish community excellence.

Valerie and I extend our warm wishes to you and your families for a Chag kasher vesameach.



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

