

## Reputation

### *What would you do in a crisis?*

*27 November 2007 at SJ Berwin*

In front of a packed audience hosted by law firm SJ Berwin, Shimon Cohen (Chairman, the PR Office) and Larry Billett (Chairman, Pret A Manger) stressed that one cannot hide or run from your reputation.

Billett went on to say that your reputation, in the fullness of time, reflects your actions. If you act with respect towards others and control your greed when deciding between short-term gains or acting for the long term, then your reputation can remain in tact.

Shimon Cohen explained that if you do not recognise the value of people whether they are staff, clients or customers then you lose. He has seen countless examples where companies try to cover up the actions of individuals for the sake of the company's reputation – the full story always come out in the end.



L-R: Larry Billett, Rabbi Shlomo Levin and Shimon Cohen

With regard to personal reputation, Cohen feels that reputations are, in most cases, salvageable. However, he cited football pundit Ron Atkinson, who made a racist remark on air, not knowing his microphone was still live, as one example where the situation could not be redeemed.

Contrary to this, Shimon Cohen used the case of Mel Gibson's drunken rant against Jews to highlight how, if managed properly, one can salvage one's reputation. First, Gibson declared that he had a drink problem and went into rehab, then his people put out stories about how well he was doing eliciting sympathy from the public, after which he apologised and spoke to Jewish audiences.

Rabbi Shlomo Levin, the evening's facilitator, highlighted the Jewish perspective, citing that slander cases are very rarely brought before the Beth Din. Judaism attempts to promote the highest possible standards of interpersonal behaviour

The Jewish view is that slander should be dealt with by the individuals concerned and should not be dealt with by the judicial authorities. Rabbi Levin explained that the fact that one would get less recompense from the Bet Din than the civil courts as reinforcing this point.

Rabbi Levin stressed how Judaism lays down a challenge and recognises the importance of making individuals take responsibility for their own speech, actions and reputations. This shows how the Torah guides us in how to relate to each other, as well as G-d.