



Dancing the dance of the Rebbe

By Harav Yitzchak Reuven Rubin

Chasunahs are wondrous events filled with so much potential. Young couples stand under the chuppah, prayers fill the room, each one hoping, beseeching for the hope of a positive tomorrow. It just can't help but move me, no matter how often Hashem grants me the opportunity to witness this pivotal happening. Even in these overblown high tech times when wedding music has scaled the heights of decibel levels far beyond mere unhealthiness, it is those few moments under the canopy that are an oasis of Jewish sanctity.

The chuppah is symbolic of the building of a Mishkan, a sanctuary, the space which is holy to the new couple and creates a spiritual ambiance for their future. The Vorka Rebbe, Rebbe Yitzchok ztl, explains that the first Mishkan in the desert took most of its spiritual holiness from those who gave of their hearts to its building. The warmth and love that was evidenced by their heartfelt giving was what created the kedusha that became the mainstay of the Mishkan. The Sochatchover Rebbe, the Avnei Nezer ztl, adds that this is why the Mishkan was built with gifts from the people and not a general tax. It had to come from the heart, each part needed the wholehearted willingness of those who gave because it was this warmth that made the edifice holy. Without such sharing and giving the kedusha of the Shechina could not abide there.

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The same is with a marriage, which is the creation of a miniature Mishkan. It must start with the giving to one another, wanting to share the building of tomorrow with holiness that creates an ambiance that will be permeated with Hashem's love for His children.

Back in the days before chasunah music was an endless cacophony of thumping base beats, there were traditional dances created by tzaddikim which brought with them special

meaning. One such dance was the Rebbe, Reb Elimelech's Tanze, which originated with the holy Rebbe, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk ztl. In it, everyone pairs up and a special niggun is played. The couples hold hands and go up and under one another across the whole hall. I witnessed great Rebbes pairing up with close friends and entering into these complicated yet graceful dances. Up and down they would go, dipping low, rising high, singing, holding on to the friend's hand, smiling and even weeping. Chassidim explain that this particular dance is about marriage. It indicates to the new couple that there will be all sorts of challenges in life; up and down fate will throw us, yet, if we hold on to one another, falling and rising as one, with faith in Hashem, then we will remain singing with true warmth and hope. Sadly, as so much else, this dance has all but disappeared from many a band's repertoire, replaced by pseudo Jewish music.

Rabbeinu Yona tells us that in the Talmud Brochos we learn how if a piece of non-permitted food falls into a tub of honey where it dissolves and becomes totally mixed in, then the law is we can later eat the honey. This is because honey has a nature that anything that falls into it becomes totally transformed, actually becoming honey in itself. Therefore, it is no longer considered a non-permitted substance that fell into the tub but it has become changed into honey in and of itself. The Yismach Yisroel of Alexander ztl explains that this is the strength of the days of Purim. We are told about Purim, "in that time everything turned from darkness to light... these days are propitious to change things from gloom to illumination, sadness to joy."

We are living in very dry and cold times. Things are done because others do them; our hearts aren't always engaged. Our davening is stale, even our simchas are being torn away and becoming empty dinner parties with little real spirituality. The vats of honey that are our holy abodes have become frozen. Purim, a time that beckons change, is the moment we can revitalize all that is holy and pure in our lives. We can once more start to give of our hearts to the Mishkan that is Klal Yisroel and that very warmth can allow our sweetness to change the dark and difficult moments around us.

Purim is more than sending exorbitantly-priced Mishloach Manos gifts, or creating colour-coordinated table plans. It's about ripping open your heart and dancing the dance of the Rebbe, Reb Elimelech. Up and down, holding onto one another, giving support and hope. This is the change we need; make it yours.



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