

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh



THE WHISPER OF HOPE

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

As with most Rabbonim, the days before Rosh Hashonah come with a deluge of activity. Shiurim to give and prepare, members of the community seeking advice and direction, details of davening to be seen to, all this and so much more. You find yourself caught up handling a myriad of conflicting problems, trying to make some sense in the chaos that passes for today's daily life.

We live in a time of rapid change, Rosh Hashonah holds a different place in today's world. My Rebbe's used to speak of their youth, when the month of Ellul reverberated in the hearts of everyone around you. A sense of awe and trepidation struck all, as the saying went "even the trees screamed Ellul!"

Well today's trees grow in different soil, and the sense of extreme trepidation that Ellul used to call forth is a bit smothered in this world of instant messaging and WhatsApp.

True, our generation is blessed with more mosdos haTorah than any previous golus, and our children have been granted comparatively safe homes and comfortable lives. The muffling of the Ellul call actually is a bye product of much of our success. We are a different generation, raised in calmer times with open doors. Our generation doesn't respond well to fears being shouted from pulpits, they get turned off when berated. The eminent arrival of Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur doesn't churn their inner landscape as it did their grandparents. Every mechanech will tell you that messages of yore aren't always accepted today.

So, what can we do to give Rosh Hashonah a meaningful expression that will speak to the souls of today?

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Torah is eternal, and its message is for all generations.

Let me share some words from the prophet Nechemia spoken regarding Rosh Hashonah:

“This day is holy to Hashem; mourn not, nor weep, for all the people wept, when they heard the words off the Law.....

Then he said to them ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to Hashem, neither be grieved, for the joy of Hashem is your strength.’

The First Rebbe of Vorka Ztl explained this passage as directing the Yieden not to be too overwrought on Rosh Hashonah but rather be happy with “the joy of Hashem.”

What does the Novi mean by Joyfulness of Hashem?

The understanding is that Yiden are strengthened on this day. Even though we stand at our celestial trial wherein all our acts are examined and scrutinised, and we each realise that we are guilty of huge failures and horrendous misdeeds, yet we stand with hope. Yes, we have no real mitigation for our betrayals, yet our confidence lays in our deeply imbedded belief that Hashem loves us as His children and will give us another chance in life. His is the essence of compassion and He will never abandon us. We turn to Hashem needing a miracle, a miracle of forgiveness despite the realisation that we aren’t truly worthy.

As the Tur illustrates with a Medrash:

Other nations when facing such dire trials become totally bereft, they dress in black and become disheveled and unwashed. The fear off their ordeal overcomes them. They're foreboding of what will become of them, strikes at their very core.

Klall Yesroel acts differently. We make certain to cut our hair, wear clean clothing and wear white robes. Our tables are laden with the best dishes, and drinks. We enter the Yom Tov with a bitochen, belief in Hashem that with His mercy He will grant us a miracle and give us further life.

The Rebbe exclaims that thru this strong and solid faith in Hashem and Hashem’s love for us, we create a huge simcha in the heavens. When Hashem sees that His children trust in Him and believe wholeheartedly that He will save them, this in itself brings us salvation, this very act of faith turns over any evil decrees and instead brings a wellspring of good.

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The Rebbe concludes:

This then is what the Novi meant: “for the Joy of Hashem is your strength”. Hashem’s joy in our faith in Him is the strength that causes our sins to be forgiven and instead we are inscribed for life.

Ok, how’s that for a message for today’s young?

Our Tzadikim often noted that in the days before the coming of the Moshiach, the generation will be spiritually weak and broken. Beyond the walls of our Torah community is a world that is drifting, if not rushing, away from any semblance of morality. The term “G-d’less Society” is used more and more as the turmoil gathers in momentum. In such an era where the cacophony of the street has ripped into our holy homes in so many ways. We need to share thoughts of hope and chizuk, otherwise our young will just close their hearts.

True, sadly the trees may not be screaming Ellul on our streets, but they can be whispering the Novi’s message of assurance in Hashem’s miraculous love.

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