

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh



OF CHAIRS AND OUR FOCUS

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

I bought a chair recently, or at least I thought I bought one. In my home study there is a large chair that has served me well over the years, it has wheels, and can be fixed in several positions, nothing startling, just a standard useful well-worn office chair, the kind you see populating offices all across the nation. Sadly my present chair has come to the end of its usefulness. Its wheels no longer glide me from book shelf to desk, the positions add up today to one, the most awkward of all, and the height doesn't reach beyond shiva seat level. So as I said, I bought a chair. Only when it arrived I immediately realised that I had a problem. The box it came in was long, and thin, I thought to myself, there is no way a chair can fit in such a thin box. Then daylight dawned in my mind, I had bought a chair that needed to be put together by the owner. I had received a chair embryo, and I was meant to somehow nurture it, and bring it to life.

Opening the box was a lesson in itself, so many screws and nuts, so much sticky tape and packaging. I was astounded that this jungle of metal and rubber, could ever become the sturdy perch that would hold my full girth in comfort. As I wrestled with all this a thought came to mind.

We all have plans in life, opinions about what should be, which are often at odds to what our reality is. Looking at the mass of loose nuts and bolts, I realised that the stuff of life doesn't always turn out how we expect.

And that just may be the real problem.

Our outlook is often focused on our own understanding of how life should be run, and this may just not correlate with what Hashem has in store for us.

The Grodzitsker Rebbe Ztl tells us that the words Lech Lecha (Go, for yourself) for which the third weekly Torah reading in

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Briehis are known, were aimed at our forefather Avrohom Avinu (and we, his children) and are a guidance for a basic focus of life. “Lech,” Go from, “lecha,” your own subjective ideas or plans. Everything in our lives is part of Hashem’s Will, and stress comes when we can’t accept this.

Gutta Yiden explained that when one is faced by a challenge and refuses to see it for what it is, a nisoyon, trial, which is sent to give one the ability to grow, then we become broken and ever more entwined in its web. A Baal BetoChan understands that life’s challenges are coming from Hashem, hence they are for our benefit. When we accept this, then the nisoyon loses its hold, having lost its potency to detour our connection with Hashem.

Avrohom is being told to go away from any preconceived ideas of what we are meant to be doing here. Leave them aside and accept with love that everything is from Hashem, and thus your connection with Kaveuchal will be ever stronger.

The Grodzitsker explains further that this understanding holds true whilst doing mitzvos as well. Let go of any thought of personal gain and motive when you fulfil Hashem’s Will, it is never about your personal understanding, but only about Hashem Will.

The Lecha aspect in life is very strong, it can consume our thinking and overtake our inner landscape. Accepting that our life is about Hashem’s Will brings us a real life. One in which we can accept difficulties when called upon, do our Avodah without any selfish purpose, and truly feel connected to our essence.

Returning to that chair (I’m sure you are interested to know), well things didn’t work out all that well. I ploughed thru the packaging, finding instructions that were written in what I think is sand script, fiddled about, juggling parts and screws, only to find at the end of the wrestling match, several screws could not find a home, and the chair wasn’t fully fit for purpose. Like all such Rabbinical DIY projects, this was done whilst the Rebbetzin was out. Upon her return, she came into my study, looked at the chair, raised an eyebrow and said what I was thinking, “Really?”

Well, as I sit on my old rickety chair, I can thank Hashem that at least that exercise in carpentry served to inspire this article, and maybe help us all learn a few home truths.

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