

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



WATCHING THE MOUNTAIN

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Sitting at Kiddush last week one of our chabura quietly shared what was for me, a heartrending nugget of information. This Yied is a hiemisha psychologist and much of his work is with troubled teens and their parents. He told me that recently he met with the head of a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel that deals with boys who have gone off the derech. Not so long go such Mosdos were plentiful, with dedicated Rebbe's creating miracles of Teshuva amongst their young students. However, today there are fewer such places, and these Rabbinical heroes are struggling to find talmidim. This is not because there has been a positive turn in society, and that young men have stopped making choices that take them away from the community, no sadly not. The tragic reality is that they are leaving us ever younger, and by the time they get to the age of Yeshiva they have already drifted extremely far away. By the time they turn seventeen, eighteen, the broken parents have spent fortunes on finding help. Special interventions have taken place, deep therapy has been undertaken, and nothing has helped. Yeshiva is a distant dream, laying shattered at their feet. All they can hope for is some contact, at any level, with a hope for a better tomorrow.

The Peasetzna Rebbe Zt"l sought in his Chovos Hatalmidim, the driving reasons for why the youngsters of his generation were leaving the Torah community in their droves.

"The primary, most basic reason is that today's youth tend to view themselves as adults before their time. This is not mere speculation; the entire world is bemoaning this phenomenon."

The Rebbe is touching on something we all are witnessing today. Our young feel entitled at a young age, and see themselves as fountains of street knowledge that their elders have no chance of matching. The secular world has created an atmosphere that treats children as if they were equals to their elders in many areas, some of which include even life changing decisions. Into this mire our young are enticed, and just hoping to seal them off from this world won't always work.

In Parshas Yisro Chazal tell us how Hashem went to each nation, offering them the Torah. They each asked "what does this Torah

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ask of us?" The Eibishter chose for each nation one particular Mitzvah that would challenge them where they were most particularly vulnerable. Obviously, they each exclaimed that the Torah was too much for them to keep, and refused the offer.

The question is be posed, why didn't Hashem ask Bnei Yisroel the same question? Posing the same challenging test with a particular Mitzvah that we would find the most difficult? Why did we seem to be getting a free pass?

The Chiddushei HaRim answers that in truth we were given just such a particular challenging task, the Torah tells us:

" You shall set boundaries for the people roundabout, saying ' Beware lest you ascend the mountain or touch it; ..." (19:12) Before Kabolas Hatorah we were told that we must not come too close to the mountain, borders were set and anyone crossing would die. Continues the Rebbe, Yiden are naturally curious, setting up borders for them was the greatest trial they could be given. The fact that they heeded this law, showed that they were ready and worthy to accept the Torah.

Our young are clever, it's the default position for a yiddisher neshoma. Setting up borders was never going to be easy, it goes against the grain of a Jewish soul not to want to explore, to be inquisitive. This then was the challenge Hashem posed for Bnei Yisroel, and with our acceptance we were seen to be different from the other nations who refused to stand up to their particular test.

Our kids have a unique challenge. They are intrigued by what lays beyond the border that we have tried to erect around our Torah. When faced with an eighteen year old that is asking questions, or seeking what lays beyond the distant horizon, gifted Mentors and Rebbe's can often stop the rot by offering the warmth of a true Torah atmosphere. However, what can we do when the questioner is a youngster, one who thinks he is mature but in truth is still a mere child. The Chovos Hatalmidim speaks to this problem at length. He describes such a youngster and explains that although society has led him to believe he is mature, in truth, his mind can't grasp the entirety of his decisions and he will blunder about heartsick because of his predicament. What we must do is offer them a Yiddishkiet that is filled with the light of a joyful Torah life, one that is uplifting and happy. How? Ahh that is a real challenge. Each child, no, each person, has a layered personality that is unique to his neshoma and is like no other. There is no "one size fits all" option.

"Back in the day", we used have "kumzitz" gatherings, that were non-challenging and filled with singing voices and wondrous stories. Perhaps our younger bochurim need such moments of connections. I am speaking about young teens, the very same kids whose immature, over matured, minds are seeking something to fill the void that aches in their heart. We need mentors who will be trained to be just that, a mentor for young boys that are seeking hope. Mentoring must become a profession, not a stepping stone. I have in our chevra a young man who is a brilliant mentor for pre bar mitzvah kids. He has been offered full time teaching jobs, but Boruch Hashem , he has seen his place as a great mentor who is changing lives one youngster at a time.

This is how we can begin to hope to keep the borders of our Torah, thru understanding, love and unpretentious support of our very youngest of neshomalech. This will create a tomorrow of brave, lebedika Yidden who are real.

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