

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



THE MIKVAH OF ADAR

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

'Back in the day' Yidden thrived thru their ability to get on together despite their differences. I was raised in the early post holocaust years, and enjoyed davening in a diverse array of shtieble's wherein each mispallel came from another place 'in the Hiem' yet all congealed together into a lebedika concoction of warm spiritual growth. Almost every community had that 'out of town' feel, simply because we were all newcomers to this moment of time where communities were being born from the ashes of the European disaster. We were blessed in those early days, seeing the beginnings of a new chapter of Torah Golus being born in all sorts of little moments of light. Like witnessing during Simchas Torah hakofos a Polisher Rav embracing a white bearded Hungarian baker, both grasping the Torah, tears of love streaming down their faces screaming out 'Hashem Meilech'! There were no factions, no real divides, we were all bonded together, small in number, yet vibrant in spirit, dedicated in rebuilding and enriching our Nation.

As a kid, I had no idea what the holocaust was, survivors didn't talk, and the young were just that, young. We all just gravitated closer to one another, sensing that our leaders were taking us on a great adventure that would be important for the future.

Hashem has granted us so very much since those early days. Mosdos are filled to capacity, hundreds of thousands learn daf yomi with regularity, shuls, shtiebels, spring up in places never before seen on the Torah world radar. Eretz Yisroel shines with its energetic Torah communities, all this and so much more.

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Yet it seems that with each success we find new problems seeping in. Divisions crop up, families split, machlokes thrives, solidarity is just something spoken of but seldom lived. We may wonder if the cause of all this strife stems from our very success. Back when we were just starting to rebuild, we knew we needed one another. Communities borrowed from one another their experiences and know how. I sat on a committee in the sixties that was composed of directors from the entirety of Torah Mosdos of New York. Every sort of hat was in evidence, as was length of coat. It made no difference, we were all in the same business, creating Torah communities for the future. The achdus was the key to that further growth, and we all knew it. None of us could stand alone, the numbers weren't there.

Now, well, we can build entire towns, and elect Hiemisha Yidden into public office, it seems that we should be getting on with ease. Yet, dark clouds hover over our collective heads, and unfortunately we are not really sure if we can trust one another to work together.

Our old nemesis the Yetzer Horah has draped himself with a new cloak, one of exclusivity where we don't even want to eat in one another's home. Schools only accept one sort of child, shtiebles invite only their own kind, shidduchim are found in only a pool that is defined by extraneous habit not real substance.

Parshas Vayakhel starts with these words:

“Moshe assembled the entire community of Bnei Yisroel and said to them: “These are the things that Hashem commanded, to do them.....”

The Kodesh, the Rebbe of Alexander Rav Yitzchok Menachem Zt”l, once said that when Yidden gather together as one, and stay side by side, this in itself purifies their souls. It is just as a Mikvah sanctifies an impure man, so too Jewish togetherness purifies the neshoma. The Torah hints to this, “Moshe assembled the entire community”, Moshe Rabbenu brought together the Jews, and this created brotherhood and love. The Rebbe points out the word Vayakhel is equal numerically with the word Mikvah. Togetherness acts as a mikvah, cleansing us from our waywardness.

On our march to plenty, we have forgotten that the linchpin of Klall Yisroel is togetherness. Money has become king in too many minds, whereas kedusha and ahavas Yisroel are just notions mentioned in speeches but never piercing our inner reality.

This week's reading has an extra portion. The Parsha of Shekolim is read out just before Rosh Chodesh Adar so as to remind us of specific mitzvahs.

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The Sefas Emes begins his explanation of this event by quoting the first Mishna in Masechetes Shekalim. That Mishna says:

‘On the first day of Adar, we have people hear about: their obligation to donate half a shekel to the Beis Ha’Mikdash; and about Kilayim. This involves the need to be careful, when planting one’s field, to avoid mixing seeds of different species.’

As he often does, the Sfas Emes poses a basic question. Why were these announcements made in Adar? He answers that Adar resembles Elul in certain important ways. Elul is the month before the end of one year (and the beginning of a new year). Because of its position as a potential turning point in our lives, Elul is a propitious time for doing Teshuva. Similarly, Adar comes right before the New Year that begins in Nisan. Thus, Adar is also well-placed for a person to look inside of himself, and do Teshuva.

But, notes the Sfas Emes, there is an important difference between Teshuva in Adar and Teshuva in Elul. In Elul, people typically do Teshuva because of yir’ah (fear; a sense of awe). By contrast, in Adar, people may return to Hashem out of ahava (love) In fact, continues the Sfas Emes That is why we experience heightened joy -Simcha— in Adar. We feel more joyous because when Adar comes, our expansiveness and good feeling toward Hashem increase. Likewise, this is the reason for our obligation to make a donation to the Beis Ha’mikdash in Adar. Hashem does not need our donations. What Hashem does want is to give us the opportunity to awaken our good feelings and dedication toward Him.

Vayakhel speaks to how important it is to act kindly to one another and bond as one people. Reading Parshas Shekolim gives us a hint of how to go about this. Repenting over all our divisions, the separations created by jealousy and small mindedness, is best done thru a mind-set of Simcha. What better way to draw closer to one another than sharing in marbin besimcha, adding to communal happiness? Nothing crashes asunder the walls between us than the open simcha of Purim. Joy expands ones thinking, let us make this Adar one wherein we revel in the simcha of bringing ourselves closer to one another.



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