

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh



A MONTH THAT CHANGES ALL

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Pesach preparations are at full tilt. It's all brushes and pails to hand as that old sense of gnawing apprehension seeps in. We have all been here before, it's Pesach, that moment of time when we are meant to celebrate our freedom from Mitzrayim. And yet, well, are we really aware of the spiritual import of this time? Do we feel in all our efforts the 'bren' of these momentous days? Sadly, I sense so much despair amongst so many. We seem to exist on automatic pilot, making our food orders, scrubbing the fridge, or perhaps reserving our hotel rooms, but what has any of this to do with our spirituality? How can I be inspired whilst schlepping from one store to the next, cleaning out my bank account along with any chometz? Please allow me to share with you some heartwarming words on this matter.

The Sfas Emes tells us that when the Torah tells us, "Hachodesh ha'zeh la'chem" (literally, 'This month shall be for you') we should see the word Chodesh as an allusion to the word chadash (new, fresh) thus the passage is telling us that you have it within yourselves to find newness, a fresh sense of Hashem's presence in everything you do ("be'chol ma'aseh).

Sadly some have become distant from what it is we are doing all these preparations for. We have become so embedded with the materialism of our times, that the inner thirst for kedusha has become a distant notion, something left behind in a forgotten Yeshiva Bais Medrash, or Seminary hall.

Some have sunk into a mindless trance that whispers; just get on with it, trudge along as you do with everything else, what does spirituality have to do with anything? Get on with the pressures of the Pesach flurry of 'to do' lists.

Tragically we have become bored with ourselves, not expecting a shopping trip to do anything for our souls.

The Kotzker Rebbe once said that if you serve Hashem today the same way you served him yesterday, then you are a fraud and a copycat. What is the difference, he asked, between copying someone else or copying yourself? A person must grow every day and his avodah must be a product of the person he has come to be up until this moment. It needs to be fresh and inspired and not same old, same old.

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A Yied's avodah is not only in shul, or over a Gemorah, it is even more so in the everyday tasks that allow for our being truly living Torah Jews.

Later in the Sfas Emes's study of our reading he again returns to "Hachodesh ha'zeh la'chem", now the Rebbe reminds us that the word chodesh can also refer to the moon. With this the Rebbe tells us that the Eibishter is charging us with a holy mission: The moon lights the darkness, so too it is our task to shine light and thus find Hashem's illumination in the darkness in which Hashem chooses to hide His Essence. When shopping we should actually work on understanding the great merit Hashem has given us with all these chores. 'Oy, se'is gutt tzu zien a Yied,' (it's good to be a Yied) is a saying most have heard as youngsters. It's such a merit to be a Yied especially in these dark times of smothering materialism. We are gifted with the ability to create kedusha whilst treading along the pathways of our everyday notion of life.

The Tiferes Shmuel of Alexander writes that by doing mitzvos and acts of kindness during the month of Nissan one can be blessed with spiritual wholeness for the entire year. The Rebbe explains that just as Rosh Hashonah is a sign for our wellbeing for the entire year, so Nissan is a sign for the year's ruchniyus (spirituality). Hence, just as we act in the month of Nisan in the realm of spirituality, so we will be blessed during the rest of the year. This is what Torah means when it tells us, 'Shomer es Chodesh Ha'aviv,' that we have to 'watch' our spirituality in the Month of Nisan. In this way we can 'make' the month ours spiritually, and Hashem will help us bring renewal to our Yiddishkiet throughout the year as well.

This may sound like a far cry from our daily reality, but perhaps that is the point. Hashem has given each of us the tools to be spiritual in our every deed, Hashem created us for this very purpose.

The challenge of this generation starts with the spiritual deficit that afflicts our very atmosphere. Materialism has cascaded into our communal lives, witness the elaborate weddings, hiemisha 'rock star' entertainment, and conspicuous designer wear, not to mention trendy food that skirts the boundaries of kashrut. It is certainly a huge task to somehow focus on spirituality whilst families are vying for position in the hierarchy of Fruma 'baalabatishkiet'. Yet this is exactly what all the Pesach preparations are about.

Maybe on this Shabbos Hachodesh we will all take a breath and just think over where this is leading us and what we are seeking from Yom Tov.

Whilst shopping and running about, perhaps we should stop for a moment and ask ourselves: Is this item really in the spirit of such a special Yom Tov? Or is it just another wasted trinket to show others how 'choshev' we are.

The Rebbe Rav Tzadok of Lublin writes that the Yied Hakodosh of Pshischa said that on Shabbos Hachodesh we can feel extra ordinary renewal and a reawakening of our connection with the Torah.

May we all take advantage of this opportunity and be zoche to a future of true renewal and attachment to The Rebono Shel Olam. Let us make this Pesach a true moment of freedom from the chains of today's slavery to material nothingness.

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