

# עדת אש קודש

## Adass Aish Kodesh



### **Eternal Sands of Illumination** *By Harav Y Reuven Rubin Shlita*

It's that time of year again, Shabbos days grows longer and we dust off our Pirkei Avos so that we can dive into the sea of its wondrous wisdom. In its chapters there is sagacity couched together with deep understanding of the human condition. It is this combination that has made it a cherished handbook of life for generations of Klall Yisroel. Avos has always offered sustenance to those seeking hope in whatever situation life has placed them in.

The custom is to study a different chapter each week throughout the summer months, especially before Shevuos. The lessons of Avos are a preamble for accepting the Torah in its fullness. One passage often gets glossed over. After each learning session we gobble a few words about something Rebbe Chanania ben Akashia says...This is actually a quote from a gemorah in Makkos and is said if the learning was done with a minyan so as to facilitate the recitation of a Rabbonim Kaddish.

Before we start this year's cycle, allow me to share my thoughts on these words that often seem a mere afterthought.

To set the stage, allow me to share a whimsical experiment that I hope will whet your appetite.

Close your eyes, kick off your shoes and socks and enjoy the sand. Of course I advise this only if it's warm, you are alone, and walking on a beach. One of my greatest pleasures is to walk at sunrise on a deserted beach and listen to the ocean. It speaks an eternal language, one geared to each person's individual soul. If you follow my instructions you can actually feel the oceans pull. You can stand there at the water's edge and feel yourself being sucked into the wet sand. Just as you sense that you can't move any further the ocean crashes towards you and takes most of the sand away. You are left renewed and unburdened until the sand creates its gritty pull once again. The important thing to remember is that, if allowed, the ocean will always come and free you.

Standing this way some time ago, I looked down at the swirling water as it reached over my sunken feet and thought, 'The Torah is likened to water, and its purity can always cleanse us.'

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When we feel ourselves sinking into the grit of daily life we have the option of allowing our broken souls to become freed through the Torah's cleansing energy.

Often we become stuck and feel as if darkness is all we can hope for. This is when we should become brave, remove the material burdens that clothe our existence and allow ourselves to become engrossed in the holiness of Hashem's truthful waters.

It is all too simple to forget why we are here and what our goals should be. In our world of instant gratification we lose patience, missing out on the lessons sent our way. There was a time when we were directly connected with our every need. Food grew because we sowed seeds, chickens found their way into our pots because a shochet came to slaughter them in our back yard and then we plucked their feathers. Nowadays, the link has disappeared; someone else does everything for us and all we need do is present our plastic card and schlepp ready-made produce home. I don't think any of us would like to return to the "good old days" when mothers toiled by the washing mangle a whole day, but in the slipstream of modern comfort we have lost some very rare attributes. We don't think deeply anymore; everything just rolls along and our hearts become desensitised.

Then we read those few words:

*Rabbi Chananya Ben Akashyah says: Hashem desired to grant merit to Israel; that is why He gave them the Torah and commandments in such abundance.*

This bit of Mishna ties together much of what our Torah existence is about. We are blessed with Hashem's words and commandments and each mitzvah is a bridge that can carry us closer to our Creator. His love sees our turmoil, the seemingly impossibility of handling so much that comes our way. His commandments draw away all the doubts and washes away our fears.

Pirkei Avos is about how to internalise and energise these commandments and find their real benefit. We are blessed with so many mitzvos, each one with the ability to lift us out of our quagmire.

There are times when we feel drained and dejected, especially in this era of difficult challenges. Circumstances are changing for many and the sands that seem to hold us down eat away at our very being. We need to become reconnected with the Torah that all too often washes over us. We can no longer live as if spiritually asleep. Hashem is calling us with His message of continuity. There is nothing holding us down more than our own broken spirit. Let's take all the marvels of Hashem's mitzvos and allow them to become real once again.

The ocean of the Torah is splendid with its spiritual opportunities. The saddest thing is that we just don't look into these jewels and sense their illumination. With all the immediacy of today's world we should try to go down to the edge of our source for life, cast off our shackles for at least a moment and reconnect with the swirling waters that feed our souls.

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