

עדת אש קודש

Adass Aish Kodesh



AVROHOM AND THE WINTER MORNINGS

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

The calendar does this trick twice a year. We are lulled into a pattern of life that offers some sense of regularity, allowing life to glide by in its own way. Then we are told, it's time to move the clock. Move the clock! Did you hear that? Move the foundation of my well organised daily life? Supplant my well-oiled (although often late) schedule? It is such an imposition, yet, no matter my personal outrage, clocks must and will be changed, twice a year despite my protestations. Autumn we move them back an hour, only to move them forward come spring. Ok, I get why, and I actually agree that it's for the best, but come the day, chaos beckons.

Last week we were amply warned, the regular shul kloppers duly announced several times that we should not forget to change our clocks. Like everyone else, I was not going to let the curse of the 'Clock Change Sunday' strike me. You all know what I mean, people forget about the change in the autumn and although they could gain an hour of Sunday morning sluff, instead they strive into shul an hour early with a look of gormless surprise across their face. Not Rubin, no sir, I run about the house Motzei Shabbos changing all the clocks, making certain we are all aware of the momentous change we are facing. This year I even found myself changing my wristwatch twice, don't ask. Came Sunday morning I was perky as always, well rested and calm. Truth be said, I hardly slept Motzei Shabbos, I had one eye on the clock worried I would mess up despite all my plans. The funny thing was that on Monday morning my inner clock rebelled and I woke up an hour later than usual, go figure.

Well, now the clocks are firmly in their winter place, the days are shorter and, as for me, I have already had my first "winter cough," a sure sign that the cold season has arrived. In truth I actually enjoy the dark mornings, where quiet seems to reign supreme and all one hears is one's own sounds. There is a certain seder to winter; in its bareness we can find so much life. It is during these days that one can find time to contemplate, to think of things that the brighter days do not facilitate. There is nothing like waking in the dark, stumbling down the stairs to prepare that first tea, and looking out over the dark, still streets.

With all this as a preamble, we start to read the wondrous parshios that introduce us to our forefathers, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov.

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The Rebbe, Rav Pinchos Koritzer was known to say that until we reach the parsha of Lech Lecha the world is still in chaos. With the reading of Avrohom Avinu and his chesed the world becomes a place where fresh salvations come about. As we have learnt from Gutta Yidden, a Jew has to live with each week's parsha, since the events of each reading bring with it the influences depicted therein. Lech Lecha and Vayera bring us the wonder of Avrohom and his chesed, and it is there for the taking.

Our generation needs large doses of chesed. Despite the influx of so much artificial light, our souls grope in the darkness. We stumble around not certain what it is we should be feeling; many of us are aching for meaning.

So where can we begin? The Rebbe, Rav Shlomo of Karlin tells us that the greatest yetzai horah we can allow ourselves is to forget we are children of the King of Kings, Hashem no less! These parshios reawaken the feeling of who we are and from whence we came.

Avrohom's tests were given so that he could realise within himself what strengths of emunah he had. The Maharal tells us that none of these tests were given so Avrohom could prove how much faith he had. After all, Hashem knows our hearts without our proving anything. No, these tests were administered to stir up in Avrohom his strengths and abilities, things he may never have been aware of otherwise. The Ramban says that a *nisoyon*-test- brings the potential into actuality. It is the same Hebrew word as used to denote a flag pole, to publicly demonstrate the hidden potential of the individual. The Avnei Nezer says that people use only seven percent of their potential. The word *nisoyon* is related to the word *nes*, miracle. In every test life throws our way, we can overcome each miraculously because hidden within our souls is a spark of Avrohom Avinu. Each new test brought further awareness of the different areas of Avrohom's emunah.

In Lech Lecha Avrohom is bidden to go outside and count the stars. Chazal explain that this is exactly what he did. Obviously such a feat is impossible, no matter, Avrohom was given a task, so what if it is impossible, count we must! Time and again he found himself faced with what could be thought of as insurmountable difficulties. Yet, when one is called upon to do something that may seem impossible, if needs must, one will muster hidden strengths that allow him to go beyond anything he would have felt possible. This is true physically and even more, spiritually; we have hidden strengths and our trials are sent to us so we can learn about our inner resilience and use it for good.

We absorb these life-affirming lessons from the story of Avrohom Avinu, and with this knowledge we can plot our own way through life. Nothing is mentioned in the Torah without purpose, and in the world that was previously prone to chaos, it was Avrohom with his chesed and steadfastness that brought clarity to mankind.

So as you peer into the dark streets whilst the rest of the house slumbers, think of your personal nisyonos, whether they be children, parnasah, or inner peace within yourself, and conjure up the strength to go forward. It is at these quiet moments, when you can perhaps allow a tear or two to be shed, when Hashem is so close. Ask Him, your Father, to give you the ability to realise that this is all for your own good and that with the miracle that lies within you, you will illuminate your inner self and those around you

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