



The Burdens of our Burden

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

So much is taken for granted, new styles and dynamics have come along, and become normative. What may have been thought of as “over the top” is now common, and to critic anything is to be accused of being “out of touch.” I often hear from young couples, “This is how our generation does things, and no one will listen to you if you say otherwise”. Well, I may be of yesteryears generation, but, having been blessed to see several generations, I think I just may have something worth hearing, even though it may not resonate with today’s superficial ideals.

The level of spending on simchos, the conspicuous decorations of our homes, the places we go for vacations, all have been ramped up to stratospheric heights. These were previously seen as the obsession of those driven to showing off their wealth, however today these trinkets are dangled in the front of the most pedestrian of our holy ranks, causing jealousy and driving up debt beyond measure. I know, Rubin talks about this all the time, and yes, it is one of those particular pet peeves that I feel strongly about. Allow me to explain why this particular quirk of our golus drives me too such distraction.

“Polisha Chassidus” was built on the foundations of minimalism when it came to gashmiyus. It was taught that in our Avodas Hashem, we should try to have the least amount of stuff distracting our attention from what is important. I am not advocating that we live in shacks and dress in rags. Chas Vesholom, we are Hashem’s chosen people and should live and dress accordingly. Creating Kiddush Hashem includes presenting yourself in a positive manner. But there are lines that must be drawn, if not we can easily forget



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what it is to be Hashem's Chosen people. It is very easy to forget The Eibishter whilst running up the hill of material opulence.

The Rebbe Reb Bunim of Pshischa ZT"l speaks to this issue with the direct and holy manner that made him the leader of Polish Chassidus all those years ago.

In Parshas Va'eira we read: 'Who takes you out from under the burdens (Sivlus) of Egypt.' (6:7)

The Rebbe queries the use of the word "burdens" rather than "servitude" or "Slave". He explains that in the case of the Egyptian experience, at first when we were enslaved, it was a shock and we suffered from having to be entrapped in such an immoral land. Tragically with the time, we grew used to our situation and the harshness of our existence seemed normal. This tendency to accept (sovel) what was untenable, was the greatest burden we experienced. We had grown used to slavery and saw it as normal. It was at this particular tipping point that Hashem took His Children out of Mitzrayim. Living in soul destroying circumstances was bad enough, accepting it as normal, that was too much.

The fact that we are becoming used to the excesses we see about us, this is the harshest part of our present golus. The very thought that our sense of tzniyous has somehow become diminished, or that in today's world, we no longer think about how certain actions on our part are really in keeping with our role as Hashem's Chosen Nation. This is the threat that can bring us down as a Holy people. Our young are being led to believe that we old-timers just don't understand, that we live in the mist of ancient history. Such attitudes are allowed to fester because in this broken world, the masses who are the voice of unbridled technology have equal access to our holy children. Mass media screams out for more consumerism, at ever greater levels, leaving our young torn and complexed.

Hashem wants us to enjoy the wonders of this world that He created. However, this was never meant to be a licence to lose our kedusha. We are seeing a slavery that is enveloping our loved ones by stealth. Those who speak out are marginalised.

In these weeks of Shovovim, we must delve into what our own situation is, and how we can strengthen ourselves in these turbulent times. We should not only have sympathy for those being lost, but empathy, true heartbreak and understanding. Perhaps in this way we can reach across the maze of misunderstanding, and touch the hearts of those in trouble. Let us first realise what our burdens are, and then bring light back into our lives.

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