



WAKE UP TO COFFEE!

HARAV Y. REUVEN RUBIN SHLITA

As a writer I receive a huge mailbag containing morsels of wisdom from kind hearted readers who enjoy sharing thoughts and stories that come their way. The following is just such a gift, so let's read it together....

"How do we define our lives?"

A group of alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life.

Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups - porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite - telling them to help themselves to the coffee.

All the students had a cup of coffee in hand, after which the professor said: "If you noticed, all the nice-looking expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is only normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases it is just more expensive and, in some cases, even hides what we drink.

What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups...and then began eyeing each other's cups.

Now consider this: Life is the coffee while the jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life. The type of cup we have does not define, nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee Hashem has provided us.

We have lost the inner understanding of what Avrohom Avinu and Sarah Imenu gave us as our heritage.

Time is a gift, life is what you make of it, however, sadly for many it is spent stressed out over the superficial trappings of life without really living. The first parshios of Bereishis speak of worlds built and destroyed. Mankind kept losing the truth of what it was they were created for, and instead focused on material gain or selfish want. Towers to the heavens, rains of huge proportions, yet nothing was

בס"ד



Adass Aish Kodesh

Harav Y. R. Rubin Shlita
36 Bury Old Road
Prestwich – Manchester
M25 0FT



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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
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learnt. It took generations until one still voice, that of Avrohom Avinu came to the fore and taught what was true. Each year we learn anew these precious stories, yet we keep getting stuck in the old shallowness and allow ourselves to fritter away yet more time. We all know that these passages of the Torah are meant to sensitise us to our real role in life, and that even before any mitzvos are taught, we must learn how to make our lives truly worthy of them. Yet many times we just chug along, blithely losing the one gift that can never be repaid, that being our time here on earth.

There is an old Irish folktale that goes something like this.... The young men of a town were seeking to get from one street to another but found a tall wall was in their way. They gathered at the foot of the wall trying to figure out how they could get over it. Then one enterprising youngster grabbed the cap off his head and threw it over the wall. Without further ado he somehow clamoured up the wall, knowing he had no other way to retrieve his cap. Folklore tells us that this act became a metaphor for all life's obstacles, and in Ireland it was said "throw your cap over the wall" whenever life seemed to bring obstacles that could be seen as insurmountable. Being spiritual in a world filled with darkness may seem impossible, yet we can hurl our caps over the wall that cuts us off from the Bren (fire) of Yidishkiet and somehow make progress.

I had the zechus (merit) to sit with a great sage at a Chasanah recently, and his every word glimmered with the sweet truth of Torah wisdom. He told me that in the world today we may see many of our brethren doing mitzvos, yet something seems to be missing. We have lost the warmth, the energy and we seem to be sleepwalking through all the many acts of righteousness we do. This has happened because we have lost the inner understanding of what Avrohom Avinu and Sarah Imenu gave us as our heritage. Our hearts are encrusted with stress over materialistic goals. We walk with frumkiet yet we have lost the ability to feel their fire. (As he said this I looked up to see the large circle of guests dancing around as the music thumped through my ears. It was that sort of listless shuffle that one sees too frequently at similar occasions, coupled with a vacant stare and a distinctive heaviness of breath.) This Rav smiled and whispered: "Remember when we were young? Before Rosh Hashanah the whole world seemed to be energized with the need to come closer to Hashem. Today it's just another Yom Tov, another reason to buy a new suit, or some fancy shatchka for the table."

Now is the time to sweep away the cobwebs and reignite the fire of a Yidishkeit that energizes the very being. Let's not lose what it is we are created for, our service to Hashem is needed today more than ever. It is our gift to be the generation that may well bring the final redemption, so let the coffee wake you up.

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