

THE SHEVUOS COLLECTION

HARAV Y. REUVEN RUBIN SHLITA



PUBLISHED BY ADASS AISH KODESH
PART OF THE INFORM ALL PROJECT LTD

CONTENTS

Knowing our holiness.....	2
The Rhythm of the Heart - Chapter 122	5
Making sacrifices for a greater end	9
Rhythm of the Heart - Chapter 92	12
Please turn off your phone while reading this!	17
The journal of your life: a key to the future.....	21
Living in the fast lane is not for us	24

Designed & Printed by:



KNOWING OUR HOLINESS

“Alla Yieden Zenen Hielig”, All Jews are Holy, these words were seared into my heart at a young age by Tzadikim who had been thru the worst that Golus could throw at us, and even more. I have often thought about they're glowing example, wondered how they survived with their trust and love for all Yieden still intact. It's as if the grainy pictures we have of those awful days are somehow divorced from the warmth and simcha that those survivors showered us with. As the years slip by, those days of vibrant rejuvenation of Klall Yisroel slowly pass into history. The Great Lions of our rebirth leave and all we have left are their stories. They speak out at us from the pages of glossy new books that depict a bit of their heroism, speak of the terrors, and the conquering of light over darkness.

The magic key that they each held was the innate knowledge of how each soul is holy, no matter its outer garb or circumstances. Thousands of lost yiddisha sheep were gathered up into the arms of those Tzadikim and given the waters of eternal Torah truth bringing them true life.

We live in what has been called “The Post Truth Era”. This refers to the sense that the world no longer lives according to what is the facts are but rather by notions created by the media masters and their ilk. How then can we still feel those truths that our Gedolim have taught us? Where did the notion that all Yiden have a special neshoma go?

On Shevuos we should think of the essence of what those Yiden shared with us. The Torah was given to us because for that moment we were of one heart, one soul. Golus is the antipathy of that wholeness and strives to drive us apart, ripping asunder all that is good, leaving us shredded with anger and strife.

Our generation has been gifted with so much in the realm of materialism. Tragically the more we have the more we are driven apart. Sadly our young are often empty of any knowledge of what their individual holiness is. It lays slumbering under a thick suffocating blanket of selfish emptiness. We stood at Har Sinai, we were One, nothing else mattered, Hashem touched each individual thru our togetherness.

What we see today is chaos. Our young go thru the system with little in the way of appreciation for who they are spiritually nor that they have a unique tikun to fulfil. We must teach thru example what it is to be a Hieliga Yied. All Yieden must wake their souls up and escape the torpor that is enveloping our inner being.

The Aish Kodesh, the Piesnetzna Rebbe Ztl writes in his monumental sefer Tzav V'zirus:

“As a torrent river surges forth, sweeping with it all that lies in its path, penetrating into deep recesses and washing away all buried things, so does the torrent of public opinion sweep along the individual mind. You may not know it, you may even deny it, but you have been brainwashed by common belief. Carried along, perhaps more, perhaps less, you now think along these twisted paths.”

The Rebbe's words are so prescient, today the titans of the communication industry are not ashamed to say that they are shaping humanity for the future, a future molded to their limited yet powerful agendas. None of these people are elected, yet their influence effects more humans and they reach more people than most nations.

The Rebbe goes on:

“You cannot remain static in this torrent river just by standing firm in your place, you must activity swim against the flow. You

may not be successful in swimming upstream, but at least you will not be swept down by the flow.”

Shevuos is the first step, not just a nod to what should be. The Torah is alive, give your hieliga self a chance. Share with your loved ones a living Torah life, work towards cutting thru the cobwebs that stifle your soul and feel the freshness of a positive life.

It is only thru our laziness that so much has been corrupted, now each one of us must turn the tide of our lives and take ourselves to a meaningful place.

The thrill of davening, the wonder of a real Shabbos seudah, this is the nourishment of what our hieliga neshomahs need. We have so many opportunities to grow, let's take our acceptance of the Torah as the moment we turned ourselves around.

THE RHYTHM OF THE HEART - CHAPTER 122

Let me pose a riddle. What food was thought to be a cure for rheumatism, headaches, and back pain? Six million gallons of it is consumed each year in America, enough to go around the world twelve times. It has only two calories per spoonful and is vital for the continuous growth of that rare fish called the “*gefilta fish*.”

Still guessing? Well, the answer is the culinary marvel called horseradish. We call it *chrain*.

Now in England the average *heimishe* grocery will be able to offer its customers one or perhaps two different brands of this stuff, and I always assumed that this should be enough for the average *chrain* lover.

Last year I was in America, where everything is done on a bit bigger scale. There I went into a *heimishe* shop, asked for *chrain*, and was shown an entire refrigerated shelf filled with tens of brands. Sharp, super-sharp, your eyes will cross sharp, and even one that promised that I would cry while standing fifteen feet away upon opening the jar.

Yes, in America *chrain* is a big business, and so is the bitterness of life.

Gutte Yidden were wont to say, “*A verm in chrain meint az dus leben iz zees*,” which loosely translates as, “A worm living in horseradish thinks his life is sweet.” What this *vertel* says is that if one lives in a bitter circumstance, sooner or later he will become convinced that this bitterness is the norm and in fact is sweet. People live sunk in their anger and bitterness until it becomes so second nature that they feel it to be normal.

Fascinatingly, every one of us has his own brand of bitterness, unique and tasted only by himself. If you could bottle each person’s misery

you would find that instead of just one refrigerator full, we would need enough to go around the world twelve hundred times.

One of the most difficult things in life is realizing this and accepting that such is the case. We begin to see our own *chraim* as being the only truly bitter one, and it seems that no one else's is as hard to swallow. This is because sometimes, in our bitterness, we become separated from those around us. We get so involved with ourselves that we don't even think that others may be in the same situation. "Yes," we think, "I may be stacked on the shelf with others, but beware, my bottle of bitterness will blow your head off." All of this makes for disharmony in our lives. We become fractious and begin to push others aside.

For the Torah Jew, this is a horrendous mistake. In fact, it could well be the factor that causes our truly bitter *galus* to continue.

We are told that we are created in Hashem's image. Why were we given this information? So that we can accept that having been so created we are meant to act G-dly in this material world. When we act in a spiritual way we actualize Hashem's purpose in creating us. Holiness needs to be acted upon with a sense of harmony and a balanced understanding about what this world should be. Bitterness shows that we don't truly absorb all this. We speak of being *beshalom*, at peace, but somehow it all too often eludes us.

True *shalom* means harmony - harmony with one's neighbors, with Hashem, and most difficult of all, with oneself.

When we were blessed to have access to the *Beis Hamikdash*, Jews came together three times a year on *yom tov*. The city of Jerusalem became home to the entirety of our nation. *Chazal* tell us that just being in the holy city transformed the visitors. Usually when a city grows, each of its citizens becomes lost in the huge influx of people. In large centers the individual becomes forlorn and inconsequential.

Not so in the holy city. Here everyone found room; not merely physically, but more importantly, spiritually as well. Every Yid felt that he was vital and needed, everyone felt that his individual needs were being attended to. It is hard to imagine this amazing phenomenon, where thousands came to visit yet each one felt unique.

Upon our tragic loss of this wonderful experience we could very well have become confused in our own bitterness, never finding solace with others, never finding peace. But Hashem loves us, and He gave us a safe haven where every Jew can find his salvation.

The Torah is that safety place, and it's there for us to grasp. This is where we can go with our bottle of *chrain*. It is through learning Torah that each person can express his individual uniqueness and discover through its wisdom how to fend off life's hurts. No matter how many people are sitting in the *beis medrash*, every Yid is always welcome, and always able to find his place.

Shavuos is the spiritual wake-up call that reminds us of this. We learn the night through, each in his own way, and then we daven with the warmth of those hours of learning. We hear once again the manner in which we accepted the Torah as a nation, a nation that heard the Ten Commandments being given in the singular, for each individual listener. We do this and find joy within the *peckela chrain* we *schlep* with us.

How sweet are the memories that waft up on this special day - the way we so wanted to feel inspired by that night of learning, the rush to daven even though we were tired and our eyes felt heavy. Those memories are born again daily, with each reading of the Torah, for each generation.

Torah is the blessing of Jerusalem. It offers the ability to find harmony with others and with ourselves. Shavuos brings this home once more, in its sweet loving way.

This *kapitel* awakens us to the Jerusalem experience and speaks of its true meaning.

Samachtu be'omrim li beis Hashem neilech..., "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'To the House of Hashem let us go.' "

Picture the scene to yourself. You're *schlepping* along the roadway of life when all of a sudden a wagon of friends comes your way. "Come on pal, we are going to the same destination as you, to the House of Hashem, the Torah!" What joy! What a relief! I had almost forgotten what this road is meant to be for. It's about going with others - *Klal Yisrael*, my friends - and finding Hashem.

Yerushalayim habenuya ke'ir shechubera la yachdav..., "Jerusalem, which is built as a city that fosters togetherness."

Shavuot brings Torah and Jerusalem together in our minds. The holiness of that city was its ability to bring all of us together. This was possible despite each individual's *chraim*; in fact, the very act alleviated the sharpness that one felt.

Shalu shelom Yerushalayim... "Inquire after the peace of Jerusalem; may those who love you enjoy serenity."

Peace - there's that word again. It means wholeness and harmony, and it's a name used to describe Hashem. Such peace can now be found in the Torah.

Yehi shalom becheilech..., "Peace shall be within your walls, serenity within your palaces."

MAKING SACRIFICES FOR A GREATER END

The Rebbe, Reb Bunim of Peshischa ztl (1767-1827) was a leader who had a career that covered a vast amount of life experience. Known for his gadlus in Torah and Chassidus, he was also at one time a successful lumber merchant and latterly a pharmacist. His gift of explaining deep concepts with stories lives on today in the many seforim that quote him. One such tale speaks of how the merchants of that time would travel to the great fair in Leipzig. The trip could be pivotal for their livelihood. The Leipzig Fair drew in thousands of businessmen from all over Europe, and large fortunes could be made in those few days. Travel was problematic, the roads of Poland were rough and dangerous, and one never knew where or if he would find a place to sleep or eat. The taverns in which the travellers stayed were often very basic and kosher food was not always available. Often as not, these Yidden had to live on stale bread, salt with some water. Would any of them even think of turning around and going home? Obviously not. They were going to make enough money to last a whole year; anything they suffered on the way was worthwhile. They could subsist on meagre rations, sleep on the floor and suffer every indignity, because their focus was on the prize: the fair in Leipzig.

Our Mishnah tells us:

This is the path of the Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation, but toil in the Torah.

The Rebbe explained that the Mishnah is underlining the fact that this world is just a pathway to the world to come, and this road must be navigated through the Torah. Our relationship with life's material comforts is much like the business traveller to the Leipzig fair. Sure, he would prefer a comfortable bed and sumptuous food, but he would be content with just bread and water if it meant getting to his

destination. Whilst we may desire worldly comforts and pleasures, even if we must go without them we must not be deterred from our mission in this world: bringing Torah into our lives and creating a Kiddush Hashem.

The goal of our existence is not about obtaining material trinkets or creature comforts. This world is just a road, a pathway leading to a much greater destination, a bond with Hashem. This is what is meant by “the path of Hashem” of which the Mishnah speaks.

Allow me to turn to another story concerning those businessmen of old.

A Chassidic lumber merchant in Riga was calculating his accounts. Under a column of figures he inadvertently wrote, "Total: *Ein od milvado*—There is none besides Him!" In response to his assistant's raised eyebrow he said: "During prayer it is considered perfectly natural to let one's mind wander off to one's lumber in Riga. So what is so surprising if in the middle of business dealings the mind is invaded by thoughts of the unity of Hashem?" Jewish life is meant to be focused on this one overarching truth!

The Mishnah continues:

*If you do this, "You are praiseworthy, and all is well with you."
(Tehillim 128:2) "You are praiseworthy" in this world; "and all is well with you" in the World to Come.*

The Mishnah isn't directing us to live in want; rather, we are being told to accept that which Hashem sends us and know it is His Will. You will be praiseworthy in this world because it is a world swamped with consumerism that goads us into wanting ever more, whilst yours will be a life free from the insistent drive for material gain which can never be assuaged. The Torah will give you an understanding of what is important in life and what is a block that holds you down. In a life filled

with these goals then no matter what happens, you can accept things for what they are: Hashem's Rotzon. Praiseworthy can mean that Hashem will be extolled by your actions bringing a Kiddush Hashem amidst the darkness of emptiness that drives others.

As a young student I had the merit to sit at the feet of many holy Yieden who may have seemed poor and unnoticeable to others. Coming to America as survivors from the hell that was the Churban, they had nothing, yet in truth everything. I often ate on Shabbos with one such Yied who shared his meagre meals with this "Americana" bochur. He had a unique custom, in that at every Shabbos meal he would learn something from the Holy Sefer Noam Elimelech from the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk. This is no easy undertaking; the sefer can be very challenging. Yet, when he read from its pages, we all sat silently engrossed, not only in the words, but for me, the sense of spirituality he brought into that sparsely furnished room.

This was not a unique situation; I saw this time and again from many of those brave sweet Jews. As I grew older and became more involved in communal affairs, I began to delve into what it was that gave these Yieden the wherewithal that allowed them to survive and then thrive after all they had experienced. There was just this determination that seemed simple but was extremely deep. They lived with Hashem; it didn't need explaining. It was just there for others to learn from.

Avos is a primer taught before Shavuos because before accepting the Torah we must be sensitized to what it means to live as Torah adherents. In this final chapter we find bold nuggets of what this task entails. This Mishnah explains what life is and what is real.

RHYTHM OF THE HEART - CHAPTER 92

THE MIDRASH SAYS (SHEMOS RABBAH 5:18) THAT THE JEWS IN EGYPT WERE IN POSSESSION OF CERTAIN SCROLLS WHICH THEY WOULD READ ON SHABBOS AND WOULD GIVE THEM GREAT PLEASURE – FOR IN THE SCROLLS WERE WRITTEN WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND PROMISES OF REDEMPTION. INDEED, THIS IS WHY PHARAOH DECREED THAT THE JEWS NO LONGER REST ON SHABBOS, SAYING (5:9), “INCREASE THEIR WORKLOAD, AND LET THEM NOT DWELL UPON MESSAGES OF FALSEHOOD!”

STRANGELY, NOTES R' YAAKOV KAMENETSKY ZT”L, IT SEEMS WE HAVE NO RECORD OF THESE SCROLLS OR WHAT THEY CONTAINED. HOWEVER WE FIND IN THE TALMUD (BAVA BASRA 14B, SEE RASHI IBID.) THAT THE 11 CHAPTERS OF TEHILIM/Psalms FROM CHAPTER 90 TO CHAPTER 101 WERE AUTHORED BY MOSHE (AND WERE LATER DICTATED AND INCLUDED IN THE BOOK OF TEHILIM BY KING DAVID).

CHAPTER 92 OF TEHILIM IS ENTITLED MIZMOR SHIR LE- YOM HA-SHABBOS – A POETIC SONG TO THE DAY OF SHABBOS. PERHAPS THIS WAS PART OF THOSE SCROLLS....DESPITE ITS INTRODUCTION, IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY MENTION OF SHABBOS, PERHAPS TO THE DOWNTRODDEN JEWS ENSLAVED IN MITZRAYIM, IT'S UNIQUE MESSAGE WAS THE TONIC THEY NEEDED TO CARRY ON. THE FOLLOWING IS OUR COMMENTARY ON THIS PSALM FROM OUR BOOK ON TEHILLIM:

I was privileged to have met a Yid who described himself as the last Yid alive in the world, and I consider myself blessed. He is a life-time inspiration.

Obviously the fellow was mistaken. *Baruch Hashem* he was not the last Yid, but at the time of his story he rightfully thought he was.

It was after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, when a minute number of Yidden who had somehow managed to secrete themselves in hidden quarters remained there for some time longer. One of these Yidden was Reb Leibel, who was then a young man. He had holed himself up in a small crevice that had somehow been overlooked by the Nazis, and by sheer determination he survived. During daylight hours he would remain in his small hole, venturing out at night to scavenge about for food. He became part and parcel of the deep

shadows, knowing all too well what being discovered would entail. He lived out the rest of the war in this manner, never speaking, contacting or touching another human being.

In his matter-of-fact description of this hellish period of time, Reb Leibel told me, "I was sure that I was the last Yid alive in the whole world." And who could blame him for thinking so?

But there is yet a greater measure to this man's heroism, one he stated just as simply. "Not once, never, did I lose faith in Hashem." Even though he was sure there were no more Yidden alive, he remained steadfast in his faith. He still looked to Hashem as a child of Yaakov, and even if he was the last such child, he would not lose his allegiance to his soul's roots.

I have often thought of Reb Leibel's words. Do I truly grasp their depth of meaning? And from where did this simple chassidishe Yid find such strength? I only hope their import has given me a part of his remarkable intensity.

It is an incredible fact of history that the Jewish people have remained faithful to their Creator regardless of the vicious mayhem that has marked their lives. From whence does this come? And how do we relate to it in our lives today?

In *kapitel* ninety-two of *Tehillim* we find some insight. **"To relate Your loving-kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness in the nights."** The usual explanation of this verse is that "morning" symbolizes the times when things are bright and the sun shines upon *Klal Yisrael* as a nation. Then it is easy and only proper that we publicly relate Hashem's many kindnesses. At "night," when the world turns dark and we feel only pain, then we must live on our faith.

In the midst of the *churban* of the Warsaw ghetto, the saintly Alexander Rebbe, *zt"l*, delivered to his chassidim another inspiring message.

“The verse says *emunascha*, ‘Your faithfulness,’ rather than *emunasi*, ‘my belief in You.’ It’s not a Yid’s belief in Hashem that gives him life at night. It’s the way Hashem believes in us that gives us life. When the night is so dark and endless, what keeps us alive is remembering how much Hashem believes in us. Hashem believes that we will bring the coming day.”

I must admit that when I first saw these words, my heart gave a leap. Here was a saintly tzaddik in the midst of a yawning abyss, crying out for Yidden to remain strong because Hashem has faith in us! What strength, what emotional power!

Yidden have so much within themselves. Each one of us carries an unbelievable amount of potential, but our failing is that we have no faith. I don't mean faith in Hashem - I mean faith in ourselves. As a *gutte Yid* once told me, to have faith in Hashem one must first have faith in oneself.

Reb Leibel showed that kind of faith. He proved that Hashem's faith in us has never been misplaced.

The concept that Hashem has faith in His children and that the new day will arrive through our perseverance is so beautiful and so powerful, that it enables us to actually turn the darkness into light. The *kapitel* goes on to describe how we can live by this faith. The secret is to see Hashem's greatness beyond what seems apparent at any one time.

“How great are Your works, Hashem; how infinitely profound are Your thoughts.” The Seforno explains that Hashem's “works” are what is visible, while His “thoughts” are the Divine purpose behind each

creation. **“An empty-headed man cannot know, nor does a fool understand this.”** Those who are uneducated in the realm of spirituality cannot possibly conceive all the wonders that Hashem has created.

Notice that the passage speaks of two levels of ignorance. The empty-headed person refers to one who is ignorant due to simple lack of knowledge. This can be remedied by study with Torah sages. The fool, on the other hand, is one whose limited experience does not wish to allow room for Torah truths. Such a fellow is frightened that the truth will cause him to question or change his whole lifestyle.

“When the wicked bloom like grass and all the evildoers blossom, it is so that they may be destroyed forever.” The ultimate test of faith is when one witnesses how evil seems to thrive and find success. This is where we must muster the strength of faith. Although superficially the wicked ones seem to be winning, the *kapitel* tells us succinctly that their end will be destruction.

This psalm was designated to be sung on Shabbos, for only on Shabbos does one have the quiet space and peace of mind needed to delve into these difficult truths and absorb them.

The Maharal explains that Shabbos is a spiritual day, not connected to the physical world. Therefore, even though creative work is prohibited on Shabbos, creative spiritual work is permitted.

Where do we find the strength of a Reb Leibel? Perhaps by sitting down in the creative quiet of a Shabbos or a *Yom Tov* and expressing the truths of this *kapitel* in our own lives. We often gobble up our davening without hardly a thought, missing so much along the way. Shabbos and *Yom Tov* excite the soul and give us the ability to enthuse our prayers with individual meaning.

The *kapitel* goes on to say, **“The righteous will blossom like a palm tree, like a cedar in Lebanon he will grow tall. Planted in the House of Hashem, in the courtyards of our G-d they will blossom.”** The faith we need, as well as the faith that Hashem has in us, will find nourishment through the Torah and the Torah-righteous. There we will blossom and there we can grow tall.

Yes, I had met the last Yid alive, and he had not lost his faith in Hashem nor turned his back on the loving-faith that Hashem has in us. Instead he chose to **“declare that Hashem is upright; He is my stronghold in whom there is no injustice.”**

Yom Tov and Shabbos are both G-d-given opportunities to bring all the strands together and balance our hearts with true understanding.

PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR PHONE WHILE READING THIS!

When I was a bochur learning in Eretz Yisroel no one had a phone at home. If you wanted to call to America you would book a time at the Post Office and then stand on line till it was your turn. After a long series of clicks and sputters, one could faintly hear the distant trill of the phone ringing in far off New York. Then the shouting would commence, "Hello? Hello? It's me! Who? Me, your son. Hello?" If the wind was blowing in the right direction and Mom's phone was not too ancient, you would hear the faint sounds of home. This is what passed for technology and no one thought it insufficient. In truth it was a marvel the technology worked at all. I remember waiting to become a choson for a Mazel Tov telegram from my Rav. It came just in time for the vort and everyone was surprised it arrived at all.

Well, today is another time and place. Phones slip into the pocket without a thought, and we can contact one another instantly wherever we are. It was not that long ago when having a mobile phone was so unique it was the toy of the very rich or those earnest few in emergency services. Now everyone seems to be tethered to some sort of plastic object and our thumbs have become the most important feature of our hands. Yes, the phone has certainly arrived and is indisputably a lifeline for modern living.

Sadly though, as with all great advances, this comes with huge dangers, and as these gizmos become more and more sophisticated, the technology changes quicker than we can manage.

The purveyors of these 'must have' instruments are clever in their hype; they now class phones as being "smart" and those without one are led to feel that perhaps they're lacking.

The stark truth is that unfettered use of mobile phones can be inimical to our relationships, our Torah lifestyle, and our own sense of well-being. Who hasn't noticed that at *simchos* there can be whole tables of guests sitting together, yet each individual is glued to his little screen, poking his fingers frantically whilst the host sees his expensive meal going to waste. How often is the silence of a *Shemonah Esrei* disturbed by some ludicrous ringtone? How about the nudging of neighbours in the middle of a *shiur* to draw attention to the latest 'WhatsApp' notice? There is a whole substrata of conversation going on with individuals and their phones, private and exclusionary. People come to *shul* or a *simcha* and don't communicate with those around them; it's all about the world in their hands.

Not only are *levayas* interrupted by the regular pings announcing the arrival of yet another useless email, but I have witnessed sweet *Yidden* reading the said emails in the middle of the *hespedim*.

I won't belabour the point; anyone with open eyes and a sensitive heart will know exactly the message. These phones have taken over much of so many lives; too often *Yidden* are living in the world of WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook together with whatever else awaits us around the bend.

What was meant to be a convenience has become a lifestyle, one that can be detrimental to the *neshoma*.

The problem with phones is not merely about internet usage for kosher and practical purposes; it's about disenfranchising ourselves from others. Our young families have seen members become addicted to games, gambling, dangerous chatter, and much more. As a Rov I have shared more than a few hours hearing how phones have taken over families to the point that spouses no longer talk to one another; instead they sit across from each other at meals, eyes focused on the

phone screen. Children try talking to Tatty all the while knowing that his eyes are straying to the phone screen, monitoring its activity.

There is another point to be made: the fact that this piece of plastic lays in one's pocket, beckoning its owner like some needy soul seeking attention, distracts the owner, stealing any real sense of focus. People take out the phone for no reason, just to check if World War Three didn't start without him knowing. It's crazy; we don't talk to others anymore; we walk in the street like zombies, in the thrall of small screens. Many seem to be living in a parallel universe, not seeing or feeling for those around them.

A few weeks ago The *Gerrer Rebbe* directed his followers to new guidelines when it comes to phone usage. To better understand what it is the Rebbe is asking of his community, let me share with you a summary from one young man:

Let's understand together what the *Gerrer Rebbe* has asked of people.

He said: "I know that there are people who deal in business. I know that there are many technological advances today. I know all this. But what I want is one simple thing: I don't want you to be addicts. I don't want you to come home and be all the time with your phone- and not with your family and your children.

"You need a smartphone for business? No problem. We have a *Vaad*. Send them the list of what you need for your business and you will get everything. But one thing you will not get- this smartphone will not have the ability to make or receive calls. It will be a work platform- and that's all. When you get home you will be able to calmly put it aside without having to worry about missing a call. To make and receive calls you'll have a kosher phone like all Chareidi Jews. Work, emails, you'll have it on the other gadget."

It is obvious that the *Rebbe* has seen where all this phone addiction is leading, and for the sake of the future of *Klal Yisroel* he is pleading for some sanity.

The *Rebbe's* missive should be read and embraced by us all. We owe it to our children, to the thousands of young marrieds of our wonderful community, and most of all, to ourselves, to release our souls from this new *Yetzer Hora*.

Let's put things right now, so that when we all celebrate our acceptance of the *Torah* on *Shavuos*, it should not be interrupted by some incoming emails.

THE JOURNAL OF YOUR LIFE: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

A story shared by a colleague: a few days ago someone knocked on his door. Upon opening it he found a well-dressed yungerman with a neatly trimmed beard and glasses. He introduced himself as a member of a local kollel who wanted to share something with him. It seems this fellow was collecting for his kollel in a leafy suburb of a large city. The area has a large Orthodox Synagogue with a membership that is typically diverse. In many of these far-flung communities, membership of an Orthodox shul doesn't necessarily mean one is as yet fully Torah-observant. Indeed, the Rabbis of such communities often see their first task as that of being kiruv workers. What the young man had to share with the older Rav certainly came as a surprise. My colleague left that community some time ago and has very little connection to his former flock. It seems one of those Jews shared with our collector friend an interesting story. He once was talking to the Rav's Rebbetzin and let slip that whenever he found himself in a tight spot he prayed in the memory of his late parents that they intervene from on High and put in a good word for him with Hashem. He was serious and so the Rebbetzin told him that he should actually turn directly to Hashem who is always waiting for each Yid's earnest prayers. This happened years ago, and I am sure that brave Rebbetzin had long forgotten what she had said. Well, the story didn't end there. It seems that from that day henceforth this Yid, (still not yet a Shomer Shabbos) would say a "special" prayer directly to Hashem each evening, and if needs arose, would add one especially asking for help with any individual business deal that would come his way. Suddenly, his mazel changed for the better and deals he never dreamt of making seemed to fall into his lap. Now comes the real cruncher: he has created a journal and writes down every small detail

of what's been happening. These include the tefillos said, the deals coming his way, everything. His is a journal brimming with Hashem's benevolence as seen in this man's daily life.

The young kollel fellow just wanted to tell this older Rav that what might have seemed a throwaway remark had changed a Yid's entire life. He wanted that Rav to know that all those years of leading a community that might not have seemed all that productive were in fact pivotal and life-changing.

We are about to celebrate the Yom Tov of Shavuos, the moment when our souls were imbued with the greatest gift offered to mankind: the Holy Torah. Since then every Yiddishe neshoma has a spark of Har Sinai burning within. It is for this reason that we can never discount nor ignore any one of our brethren.

When I heard this story I was reminded of something the Piasnetza Rebbe ztl wrote. He advised that every Jew keep a journal where he should write every instance where he experiences Hashem's direct blessing. Every Yid is the recipient of Hashem's bounty; the problem is we experience it initially and then that feeling recedes and becomes buried under the drudge of the mundane. We sometimes don't see ourselves as being directly connected to Hashem because we allow the material realm to overwhelm us.

That Yid, lacking so much of what we depend upon to keep us spiritually alert, has taken to expressing Hashem's chassodim in his reality. Sadly, he may be lacking in education and experience in what it means to observe Hashem's Torah, yet there he is speaking to Him directly.

We should never discount any neshomas in Klal Yisroel; they all stood at Har Sinai. Instead, we should learn from each one and better ourselves in the process.

A journal of Hashem's actions in our lives would be something extremely worthwhile in this superficial world of constant communication of empty words. I don't offer this vignette as a segula or an amulet, rather as something that can bring clarity to us and our young. As the Rebbe points out, such a personal journal could be a real legacy for our next generation, of who we are and how we lived with Hashem's chessed.

Our children suffer conflict in so many ways; instant information strikes them from all sides without any real understanding of what anything means. Let them know what Hashem has done for them, their parents and their loved ones. Great biographies of Gedolei Torah are wonderful and certainly meaningful, but for the average child, well, where does he fit into all that? We, their parents, can record the miracles we have personally witnessed and give our wonderful children a sense of the magnanimity that Hashem has showered on us and the place in our life where His presence is constantly tangible.

LIVING IN THE FAST LANE IS NOT FOR US

Have you ever come across the expression "a New York minute"? For the uninitiated it describes a measure of time that compresses much into a mere sixty seconds. New Yorkers are known for their intensity and their ability to cram into a short time more than what seems humanly possible. This is often at the expense of those mere humans who are just hoping to live life at the normal rate. A short walk in Manhattan will illustrate what we are talking about. Everyone is in a rush, focused on their needs and wants to the exclusion of any one crossing their path. As one who is New York- born and raised, I have long been bemused at the intensity of life lived there, although it was one of the driving forces that led us to leave that fair place over thirty five years ago. Sadly such minutes seem to have become the norm for more than denizens of New York. With the advent of cell phones it seems that all manners have been thrown aside and everyone is walking around acting as if they are being transported in their own little private bubble, and woe betide anyone who gets in their way. In fact, the expression "New York minute" is really out of date, or perhaps the notion of a minute having actually sixty seconds- and not more- is. Visit any place in the world and you will find people glued to their plastic gizmos of individual distraction, so enveloped in their own world that it seems nothing else matters.

Recently, I had the merit to spend some time in Yerusholayim, and believe me, New Yorkers can learn a thing or two from just experiencing an erev Shabbos in Yerusholayim. There is a famous central crossroad named Kikar Shabbos in the heart of the shopping district. The place intersects a number of busy streets and its traffic control is uniquely set up. At a given moment all pedestrians are stopped and traffic barrels about in what seems to be ten different directions. Pedestrians stand on the four corners as if awaiting the

starter gun in a relay race. Suddenly the lights change, traffic stops and everyone runs across the street. This can make for difficult moments, especially if like myself, one has reached three score and ten and may not be as agile on one's feet as before. My last encounter went something like this: on two diagonal corners there were banners spread out awakening all to the need to firstly, heed the vital laws of tzenius, and secondly, be constantly aware of the need to be vigilant in matters concerning the Internet. Both corners had adherents to their particular cause who were busy calling out to everyone in hearing distance the dangers involved if one lacks understanding in these truly vital matters. All this noise made it hard to follow what was being said but no matter, everyone was focused on the imminent changing of the lights and the run across the street. Now this is no simple jog. In fact, it is more of an obstacle course. You see, when the lights change, some vehicles get caught in the middle of the road. When the said vehicles are double decker buses, well then the run really gets interesting. It sort of takes on an "every man for himself" flavour, except it's not only men involved. Tens of people are at each corner, panting in readiness for that light change and when it happens, well, as they say in old New York, "Fuhgeddaboutit"!

My last foray into the fray left me being poked in the chest by an otherwise frum young lady who just was blinded by her need to get through the small space between two buses. As I turned around a caring tatty pushing a baby buggy rolled it over my feet. I am sure he meant to say "excuse me" but his conversation over the phone was obviously more important.

I share all this because it is indicative of a morass that is settling into our holy nation. If the world at large is busy trampling all others around them underfoot, it may not be nice, but when Hashem's chosen people do it, the continuity of the world may well hang in the balance. Our role in this world is to create a

Kiddush Hashem and being considerate of others is a major tool in creating such kedusha. It is the height of folly to believe that careening along, knocking over others in the process, is somehow going to get you to your destination any faster. Bad manners are just that: bad. Even more, they are a symptom of a callousness that indicates a neshoma that has lost touch with its own reality. “New York minutes” may be fine for others, but we should be better than that. How can we expect our children to grow up in a spiritually caring way if all they see is the boorish behaviour of their elders? We are now learning Pirkei Avos, a collection of directives that are geared towards teaching us how to be a Torah yid. We learn these valuable lessons as a prelude to Shavuos when we celebrate our receiving the Holy Torah. The operative word here is “Holy” –kodash- which means separate. We must give our young the wherewithal to rise above the crudeness of a self-centred world and teach them by example what it means to be a holy people. Reading seforim, participating in a Shabbos afternoon shiur may well be a very good thing, but is not enough. We must inculcate these directives into our real lives, and create minutes of meaningful existence, not cheap moments filled with egocentric selfishness.

The days of Sefirah are a time of general sadness. The thousands of talmidim of Rebbe Akiva died in this time basically because they had lost the ability of giving honour to one another. The “New York minute” as practiced by many of us is indicative of such behaviour. What better time than now to be working on this?

To receive the Rov Shlita's articles directly to
your inbox please email us on:
news@aishkodesh.co.uk

THE SHEVUOS COLLECTION

HARAV Y. REUVEN RUBIN SHLITA

PUBLISHED BY ADASS AISH
KODESH
PART OF THE INFORM.AL
PROJECT LTD

Sponsor an article.

The Rov Shlita's articles get published on a weekly basis and reach 1000's. For just £30, you can be part of this great zechus by sponsoring a week. You can do so through our dedicated donation page on our website; www.aishkodesh.co.uk or by contacting us at; info@aishkodesh.co.uk.