



THE GOLUS OF STUFF

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

You may have missed it, so allow me to share with you the news of a new holiday that is meant to be celebrated throughout the entire world. Yes, the governments from all the 'lands of the free' have determined that one particular day of the year, November 13th will and forever more be, "World Kindness Day". So, what do you say to that dear reader, one day, a day that will shimmer with wondrous deeds of kindness throughout all mankind, will forever more be inscribed as the day everyone gets off the merry go round of material stuff and seek out at least one act of kindness. We can all sleep better now, hope is at hand, the vast population of planet earth will at least remember that kindness is worth celebrating. It's a little like 'Mother's Day,' when errant children send notional cards to Mom to thank her for being their parent.

One day, not month or season, no, one day is more than enough for such whimsy. We don't want people to get carried away, after all they are meant to spend their time buying and using "stuff" and not being tasked into worrying about others.

If I sound a bit cynical in my reportage, trust me, I mean to be just that. Really? A world day to celebrate kindness, has it come to that? Tragically yes, as we used to say back in the day, 'Uch and vey' on us all. When I learned that society had taken upon itself such a selfless task, a little voice asked "who is making money from all this? Which segment of the stuff producing world will be pocketing possible profits?" It didn't take long for some enterprising multi nationals to get on board with adverts promoting 'kindness day', advising of what to buy others who are in need of said chesed. Stuff was hawked, from sweaters to, wait for it, bird feeders, (after all our feathered friends need some magnanimity as

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well). I know, you're thinking that I am just being an 'old timer' that is stuck in yesterday's negative thinking. Truth be told, it's just the opposite, I feel broken that a world with so much must remind its denizens to do a favour and show some kindness at least once a year, and doing so by spending money.

We are a people of compassion, children of Avrohom Yitzchok and Yaakov who gave of their very being to enhance the lives of others. Read any Heimisha publication and you will find its pages strewn with appeals for those in need. Our very being is one of giving and sharing, with our history gauged by the chesed our forefathers showed. We live in a golus that has lost its spiritual refinement and become intoxicated by the trinkets of stuff that is being dumped upon them at every turn.

Each golus brings its own dynamics. We are stretched in different directions and wonder how we will survive intact. The pivotal fact is that we will, and that the Eibishter placed us in this place because it alone is uniquely suited for our spiritual growth. We all await personal redemption at one level or another

Chanukah is about this very same dynamic; life can seem dismal, far from any spiritual reality. Yet we light some wicks and feel illuminated by Hashem's tender care.

The Bobover Rebbe the Rebbe Reb Shlomo Zt"l would sit by the menorah lights for a half hour. He would just sway as if in one with the flickering lights, sighing at times, humming quietly at others. This was an awesome service to Hashem, and no one can even begin to know what chambers of heaven his holy soul visited during that snatch of time. I wonder if the dancing lights could very well have represented the souls of all those who seek to raise themselves higher. Perhaps the Holy teacher was watching over them, sighing in the knowledge of our struggles, yet humming in the understanding that Hashem would lead each one in his own way.

Chanukah is celebrated at the beginning of winter, a time not always seen as welcoming to one's spirit. Its service takes place at the beginning of the night, when the normal workday grinds to a halt. We are asked to step off the treadmill for a moment, to strike a match and create light, finding in this material act a heavenly answer to troubled thoughts. We all await personal redemption at one level or another, Hashem offers us a mitzvah of light to show us the way, and we should just sit a while and absorb the lessons as given.

Let the world declare its "Kindness Day", as if that brief moment will dispel the glare of 'stuff' that suffocates us. Ours is a world of light, one that illuminates with the wisdom of the ages. Let our hearts find clarity in these flickering candles, and bring us closer to our final redemption.

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