



## ACHIEVING YOUR TIKUN IS NOT MERELY TOKENISM

*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

"Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone." Now read that again and do it slowly, because it holds a world of truth in its few words.

I saw this quote on a greeting card and like so much of the quick fix modern nostrums we are prescribed, I let it slide by with hardly a thought. Then I reflected on its seemingly inane message and found it reaching into the deepest recesses of my heart.

We all pray for life, and ask that it be comfortable and stress free. Such an existence, called by many "the comfort zone", sounds utopian, but we should ask ourselves if this is what Hashem created us for. Are we meant to just meander through the one hundred and twenty years allotted us with not one challenge, with no potential of growth, with no need to stretch ourselves, or, are we meant to thrive on life's challenges, always seeking to grow, constantly asking what it is we are meant to learn from what Hashem sends us?

The tests which life presents are the pastures on which we are meant to graze so that future growth can blossom. In Chasidic teachings we learn constantly that we are here to achieve our tikun, the one thing that only we can do that makes the world a little better and brings us closer to total redemption. We have choices, we can stick our heads in the sands of comfort or we can face our reality and grow. Stepping beyond the edge of coziness means taking responsibility for our actions and not blaming others for our problems.

There is one area of life where too many of us are afraid to push out of our comfort zones, to the detriment of ourselves and our children. The Chovos HaTalmidim wrote before the churban about the difficulties many were witnessing in regard

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to the young. Huge numbers of youth were abandoning Torah true life for the promise of a so called “freer life” of secular culture. The author, the Piacezna Rebbe Ztl writes in his introduction that parents should ask themselves, why are our kids rebelling? How is it that this never happened before? Can it be true that the young had never been difficult in earlier times and that his generation had turned bad suddenly? He explains that the problems weren't just because the outside world had become more challenging but that the parents were not the same as previous generations.

The Rebbe points out that in earlier times parents lived a life that burned with the fire of Torah love and commitment, and therefore the young saw what it was to be a loyal servant of Hashem. He cries out that the parents of his time had become culturally frum but for many that was their comfort zone and they weren't really illuminated with Torah love. He tells his community not to blame the teachers or the rabbis but to look within their hearts and ask if their life was an example the young should want to follow. He speaks of the need for parents to communicate with their young and give them guidance at a young age.

“You can't send a boy to cheder and hope the rebbe will instil a love of davening in him, while he sees his father talking through the Shabbos davening”

We should also make this cheshbon hanefesh and ask ourselves if the children we have been given as a treasure from Hashem have seen from us a joyful Torah experience that reverberates in our daily lives. Is Jewish life just some sort of cultural cul de sac where we live in a comfort zone of slothful complacency that can't lift its head despite the obvious problems? The option of thinking that all necessary knowledge will be given in school is no option at all. Kids need to hear from parents what their beliefs are, they must see us acting in ways that celebrate those beliefs. You can't send a boy to cheder and hope the rebbe will instill a love of davening in him, while he sees his father talking through the Shabbos davening. There may have been times when just breathing in the air of the community gave direction for the next generation. That time has long past, and parents must take responsibility for their young.

Covid has reaped disaster for many of our young (as it has for adults as well). Without wanting to sound sensational, we are now sitting on a ticking bomb of spiritual destruction. We have to emerge from all we have gone through and reawaken the embers of Torah fire that are embedded in each Yiedisha Neshomah. If we don't shrug off the greyness of where we are our young will slide away and our tikun will be lost for eternity.

I watch youngsters at davening and feel their need for something more than just a place to talk whilst the baal tefilah drones on. These kids deserve more, and parents must extricate themselves from their spiritual torpor to ensure they receive it.

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