

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh

THE SILENCE THAT SPEAKS *Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

I have an intriguing hobby - I collect words and phrases. I guess it's an occupational hazard. Recently I came across one that really got me thinking. The expression "acoustical shadow" has a certain mysterious ring to it, and its meaning and derivation just adds to this mystique.

During the American Civil War, it was noticed that however loud the noise of the battlefield would be, there were always pockets of silence very close to the actual fighting. All the furies of battle could be seen - the flashes of the gunfire, the explosions of the great cannons - yet those in the thick of it did not pick up the sounds of these thunderous events. Just a few yards away the ears of those present would ache from the tumult, yet those caught up in these pockets could not discern the apparent deluge of noise. Thus was coined the label "acoustical shadow."

We live in times where the chaos of society waxes louder with each day. The news seems ever more dire, crowds demonstrate in the streets as police threaten to quit their jobs. Trains, planes, motor ways, all seem to be paralysed.

With all this racket as part of our daily environment, no one can be blamed for seeking refuge in an acoustical shadow. However, doing so only leads to a false sense of security. The war rages on, even in those silent pockets. Not hearing the noise doesn't cut back on the devastation.

In spiritual terms, too, there are acoustical shadows - areas where we don't hear or, more accurately, where we choose not to hear. These are the areas where we figure we know as much as we need to know. We go to a shiur, but somehow we don't engage its lesson's in our hearts. We attend fine droshos that we don't really feel are meant for us on a personal level. Our constant companion, Mr. Yetzer Hara, acts as our acoustical shadow engineer, not allowing anything to enter our core. There is an old and wise saying: "A person studies the mistakes of others as an astute scholar, but cannot study his own even as a pitiful fool." We

בס"ד



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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
הרבנית הצדקנית
חיה שרה בת הרב שלמה
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create a spiritual acoustical shadow that allows us to go blissfully along without challenging ourselves.

It was just a short while ago, when we all sat huddled in our homes during lock-down, our Manhigim and Gedolim lobbied for changes in our daily lives. We all promised ourselves that 'When things would be better we would tone down the over exorbitant costs of our simchas, we would Daven with greater awareness, we would concentrate on those of our community that are suffering anguish and pain on a daily basis, we would, we would etc etc.' So much was said, with all the right intentions and yet, well here we are. Now that we are able to leave our homes and return to a 'normal' existence, we see that nothing has changed, it's all back to the same loud noise that shrieks its emptiness. The battlefield of keeping up with others is still in full throttle despite everything we said, and everyone is suffering.

Life offers us so many lessons, but we have to be able to hear them. Living in an acoustical shadow won't spur your need for growth, it will only lead into a heart broken sleep.

The Eibishter has shown us His Mastery over the entirety of creation. In those fearful days that we all shared, we each turned to His mercy for help. Yet with the passing of time, we have lost the ability to hear the tumult and have returned to our deafening silence.

A chassid once asked the Maggid of Mezritch how he could aspire to the spiritual fervor so tangibly obvious among the Maggid's talmidim.

"If you are looking for hot coals," the Maggid answered, "look among the ashes."

These words speak to the hidden spark in one's soul. You want to be alive in your Yiddishkeit? Then find the burning embers of Hashem's light that are hidden in the lowliness of what the world may perceive as spent ashes. To imbue ourselves with a fresh bren for Yiddishkiet, we must sift through the embers of the fervour we all shared when life hung in the balance.

Scientists speak of the many who are suffering with 'Brain Fog' in the aftermath of the pandemic. This is seen in a lack of concentration and a sluggishness in moving forwards. The 'Velt Brent' and we shuffle along in a silence of indolent isolation. Do we not hear the cries of those in pain? Can't we see how the madness of plenty is eating up our lives?

Society is in upheaval, and things seem to be spiralling out of control. Hashem is calling our neshomahs to action. We must wake up from our torpor, step out of our silence and reach out to others.

I have often spoken of the magnetic words that the Tzadik, the Aish Kodesh of Peasetzna Ztl cried out at hakofos just before the Churbon. He was dancing with the bochurim and suddenly raised his hands and cried out, "Kinderlach Kinderlach remember, the greatest Mitzvah in the world is to do another Yied a Tovah (favour)!" This cry went on all night, the Rebbe stopping the dancing to scream again and again, "the greatest mitzvah is to do another Yield a favour!" We are the survivors of those holy words, we have been blessed in rebuilding a Torah world, let us all seek to fulfil the greatest mitzvah.....

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