



NEVER IS NOW

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Ok here are a few statistics for all of us to chew over.

One in six children aged between five and sixteen are likely to have mental health problems. This is up fifty percent in the last three years.

Those aged seventeen through nineteen jumped to one in four.

Four in five grandparents worry that their grandchildren are under more pressure than previous generations.

Now I can read your minds, you're thinking, statistics are always jumbled about to suit those presenting them, and anyways, we are a Torah community and such numbers don't include us.

I'm sorry to rain on your parade dear readers, but if you approach any mental health professional in our community and ask about the state of things when it comes to our young, you may not receive such exact numbers, but you will hear that we too are seeing an uptick of problems in this regard.

Covid lockdowns, continuous exposure to open technology, lack of healthy social connections, have all contributed to this crisis, and crisis it is! We no longer have the option of burying our heads in the sand.

Golus is creeping up on our young, this is nothing new, it has been the ploy of the yetzer horah in every step stage of our march through history. Yet, this particular set of circumstances is unique to our present moment and like all other challenges, we must face things with the unique tools Hashem has gifted us with. As per the usual game plan of our ancient enemy, this troubling moment has not happened suddenly, no, it crept up on us and then things snapped. This golus has all the trappings of a good and comforting life, no pogrom's, no death camps. We live in a comparatively safe community, free to learn and thrive as

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1149453

our Torah prescribes, and do so under the protection of our hosts. Yet, well this 'freedom' comes at great cost. Whilst the secular world slowly became ever more godless, morals were thrown onto the bonfire of celebratory instant quotes. Many of our own holy neshomahs became infected with the emptiness this open woke style, and so, step by step the stage was set for a crescendo of chaos.

I received a notice today reminding me that I am due for a vaccine booster for covid, I don't want to go into a debate of what I should do, I only wish we had a painless booster vaccination against the chaos that surrounds us. Instead, I get phone calls asking what parents can do in the face of nagging teens who want to hang out with friends on these long summer Shabbosim. It is no secret that whole armies of these sweet holy neshomahs are bored, and get up to all kinds of mischief when left to their own devices. I don't mean just innocent pranks or empty debates, we see vaping going on and even drugs. These are kids still in our schools, still going to shul with their tatty, yet, they're eyes are listless, empty of the fire of Yiddishkiet.

So, ok come on Rabbi Rubin, what magic elixir do you have up your sleeve? Which plan have you developed? I humbly bow my head and admit, there are no instant answers, the problems are as varied as the neshomahs of our young. We are facing the challenge of the current golus, and we must look for answers given the tools at hand. I do believe that taking this crisis out of the shadows, and speaking with clear urgency is a first step. If we don't clear the air, we can't see which road to take.

Parents must gather together with Rabbonim, teachers and rebbe's and have open clear discussions. Those brave souls that are trying to do something should be given the oxygen they need to reach out further. This is no longer about the broken parents who have to somehow live with the daily pain of a child Off the Derech, this is every man and his home. This creeping golus is burning down the foundations our rebbes created after the death camps of yesteryear, and our future will be shaped by how we act now.

As I mentioned earlier, each golus comes to such moments of impasse, our tikun in this world can only be fulfilled if we see our challenges for what they are. Go out at night, see the packs of our children wandering about listlessly, then sit down as a community and think about what we should be doing.

Closing our eyes, blaming others is no answer. Our kids lack a true connection with Yiddishkiet, this is down to every parent, and yes upset grandparent to resolve. Unlike so much in this current golus, you can't buy warmth for Hashem off the shelf, you have to live it with one another. Breath it into the heart of your young, and yes, work together with one another in achdus and care.

Summer has arrived, now is the time to begin the task at hand, may the Eibishter give us the strength and fortitude to see this for what it is, and replenish our young with warmth of true Yiddishkiet.

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