



IN EACH HEART BLOOMS LIFE

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

I have a thing about trees: they speak to my heart in ways I barely understand. As the years slide by, they seem to be telling me much more, or perhaps it's not that they have more to say, only that I am more able to hear.

In our front yard grows one of my favourites, I know this particular specimen quite well. The Rebbetzin A"R looked upon it as the greatest feature of our small garden. We shared many moments of contemplation under its protective boughs, in fact it was a steady marker in our busy lives.

My personal life has been irreparably altered, I no longer have The Rebbetzin to share my life with, yet that tree still grows, still offers so much strength despite the challenges of my solitary situation.

Today I observe it in its winter garb. This majestic tree stands proudly just outside my window. In the summer it is clothed in a lush mantel of greenery that covers its inner core. Come the winter and it stands there with unadorned yet awesome bareness. The gnarled branches speak of decades of struggle, battles against all odds, victories gained and lost. I sit and wonder how that tree evolved with such poetic exactitude. Winds may blow, storms ripping at its very roots, yet it stands strong. Perhaps wounded, at times a bit torn, but giving up is never an option. That huge tree fights against all the elements, each fibre searches to find life and drink from Hashem's illumination. The twists and turns speak of skirmishes fought, sometimes winning, other times not, yet the tree climbs higher, never hesitating in its search for light.

As I gaze out onto the early morning winter sky, my mind turns to other battles, one, in fact, which we all face in our lives. Our inner landscape is often torn and scarred. We become weary and tormented from what life serves up. We are windswept, tossed about in the seas of daily experience. Amidst this chaos we grasp on to our roots, and seek illumination from above. We

בס"ד



Adass Aish Kodesh

Harav Y. R. Rubin Shlita
36 Bury Old Road
Prestwich – Manchester
M25 0FT



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change direction, turn, but find ourselves often stymied. We wonder if we can find a way, anyway, to reach up and obtain the light that our souls so desperately need.

Look again at my tall imposing friend. See all those intricate changes of direction? Nothing is easy, nothing goes as straight as we would hope. Yet the mighty tree perceives, it allows for the detours of its life, it takes the brokenness and turns it towards good. Its bold tapestry of life, lived despite all the challenges the world has thrown at it, is a bold example of how we must see ourselves. We all are challenged, yet we too can conquer the darkness that seeks to engulf us.

Having gazed at my arboreal friend I have realised (not for the first time) that everything we experience and live through is a message from Hashem. The secret of growth is that we must never give in. Even when the path seems to bend, we should hold on to what Hashem sees is best for us. A Yid's goal must be kedusha and Hashem offers us ample examples of how to experience it.

The Piaseczna Rebbe ztl writes in Bnei Machshavah Tovah:

“ We must employ all sorts of stratagems so that our prayer will be inspired. We should not lose any bit of inspiration that occurs in the midst of our day, when we are not at prayer. Use such an occurrence as a key to your soul. As was said before, every type of emotion—even if it is triggered by business and other worldly things, whether it is a broken heart or joy, contains something of a revelation of the soul, although covered in the garment of worldly needs. Take advantage of this propitious moment.”

Trees, hills, lakes, everything speaks of Hashem and His glory. We each have moments when Hashem caresses us with His warmth and allows us to experience what is beyond our Golus weariness. Touch those moments, roll them up and tuck them into your heart. We are Bnei Yisroel, seas have split for us, and Hashem touched the earth with His Heaven at the moment of our national revelation. Our souls heard those words. Look at the trees, relish their message. The whole of creation sings out Hashem's hymn of love and protection. Everything was created so that you can hold on and aspire to illumination. This is Hashem's gift to His children; let us not be too shy to accept it.

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