



## A CROWN WORTHY OF OUR TIMES

*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

It was those wondrous paper crowns that first struck me. Glistening with gold and glitter, they caught the light with splendid grandeur. I was attending a Chumash Seudah of one of my great grandson's and as the entire class of proud youngsters marched in, the sounds of 'aww' and 'ahhh' from an enraptured audience of parents and grandparents, was palatable. Of course, my eyes sought out my own particular Prince of Torah in the line of bobbing crowns, and of course he was smiling as the paper hat slipped far over his head and entangled itself in his carefully curled Peyos. No matter, he stood tall and proud, and that was the point of the exercise. The boys, sorry, they emphatically declared in Yiddish that they were no longer to be called mere boys but rather 'grosser bochurim'. They were about to embark on a lifelong voyage in the sea of our holy Torah, and were doing so with all the pomp and ceremony such a moment deserves.

We are sometimes blessed with such moments of clarity of purpose amidst the ocean of noise that surrounds us. As each of the sweet young scholars recited their well-rehearsed parts, every one of the attendees gathered up warm memories that will serve as shimmering guideposts for the future. The fathers carrying their sons on their shoulders as everyone sang and danced, did so to a tune that reaches back to our very beginnings. I imagine the smile the Rebbetzin O"H would have had at this celebration, her world revolved around her Kinderlach and it didn't matter which generation, each were always her 'little one' deserving of praise and kisses. My mentioning the Rebbetzin O"H could seem like a spoiler alert, something incongruent to the simcha of my dear great grandsons Chumash Seudah. The Peasetzna Rebbe Zt"l often speaks about how we are meant to handle any suffering within ourselves. Life doesn't just slide by without its difficulties, we each have experienced pain and yes, sorrow. However, the Rebbe explains that with such moments lies a nugget of hope. If we learn to take this pain, we become aware that others are also going through life with their own challenges. We can create a platform to offer chessed to others, knowing full well

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their need for help and understanding. In the years that I have had to live without the living partner that I was gifted with, I have heard many brochos, and no small amount of good and caring advice, however The Rebbono Shel Olam has His plans and so I wake each morning with the ache of knowing an important spiritual limb has been taken from me. With every family simcha comes the moment when a wave of the Rebbetzin's being reaches into my heart, and no one can replace this. This situation is mine, and I must carry it according to who I am and whatever circumstances comes my way. Although I can seem self-absorbed in my own vortex of pain, I know from the Rebbe that this has been sent to me for a purpose, one of allowing me to be empathetic for others.

When we were a young married couple, the proud parents of two little children, the Eibishter sent us a particularly hard challenge. We lost a baby at full-term, and were told we would never be blessed with further neshomalech. The Rebbetzin was obviously heartbroken, and never really got over it. However, it gave her the insight into helping others weather such trials, and made her the super Bubby she became. We were not yet the Rabbi and Rebbetzin, we were just two young American Yidden seeking a path forwards. All the highlights lay in the unknown future, but with each new chapter she brought the compassion of her life lessons in her handbag.

We are a people who live and thrive on moments of holiness, times when Hashem allows us to soak up His Kedusha into our hearts. Life isn't always lived with a paper crown on our head, but even when things seem bleak, we are enabled to use our memory bank to carry through life's challenges, and give others from our wellsprings of life's experiences. At this time of the year, we edge closer to the three weeks, a time marked out for a realignment of how we are meant to have empathy and care for one another. In the confusion that is life, take the simchas and cherish them, and take the difficult times and make them portholes from whence love for others can flow. With this holy combination we can preserve and grow, and hopefully, in our time, see the celebration of our total redemption with the Moshiach. Umain!

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