



POSHITA ISN'T JUST PLAIN

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

It took a long time, but when the penny finally dropped, it answered questions I never was able to articulate. This past Shabbos Kodesh my grandson handed me a parsha booklet that is given out to all the young girls in the Gerrer girl's school in America. I was very taken by the depth and yes warmth of the content, especially the stories of previous Tzaddikim. One short story caught my interest and actually awakened understanding of events in my own life that were till then shrouded in mystery. Allow me first to share the story:

When the Lev Simcha was in Toronto and was on the way to Daven in a shul, his entourage passed a different shul. "What kind of shul is that?" Asked the Rebbe. A local person who was accompanying the Rebbe replied, "It is a shul where poshita (plain) Yidden daven."

"Azoi?" Asked the Rebbe. "If so, then I will Daven here!"

In a world where everything is blaring out at us, this sweet calm message of caring for every Yied, sets the true standard of what leadership is all about. One of the hallmarks of Polisha Chassidus was its ability to bring together Chasidim of all stripes. Great Torah scholars easily rubbed shoulders with water carriers and tradesmen. The love the Rebbe's showed for the "common man" was dynamic, and this was the magnet that enlivened Polisha Chassidus throughout its history.

Now allow me to meander back some forty years. The Lev Simcha was the Gerrer Rebbe and the address where thousands came for guidance and blessings. I was living in Eretz Yisroel and for reasons undecipherable to this mere human, the Rebbe had sent me on a quest to accept a Rabbonus. At that time, the orthodox community of South Manchester advertised for a new rabbi. I had no understanding of what such a community was comprised of nor what it sought in a rabbi. The Rebbe told me to find a Rabbonus and here was a large advert seeking just such a personage. Soon the Rebbetzin O'H and I were invited to visit the community and to tell the truth, I was a

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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
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bit taken aback. The people were warm and friendly, but “eppis” things were not quite the orthodox I was used to. Shabbos morning was a real eye opener, members of the lay leadership (or executive) sat “In the Box” no not a cardboard container, but a special plush set of seats up front and raised above the rest of the congregation. They were all wearing silk top hats, black jackets and grey striped trousers. This was a long way from the silk bekishes and shtriemels I was used to. I figured this must be some sort of quant “Englisha minhag, after all we Yankees don’t call this place ‘Ye Old England’ for nothing. I took this pageantry in with great interest, and even raised a few eyebrows when I was given the honour to recite aloud the Prayer For The Queen, and did so with my broad Brooklyn accent.

More and more my eyes were opened, orthodox in Britain sure wasn’t like the brand practiced in New York City, and I wasn’t sure if the twain could ever meet. The weekend went by very well, and I was offered the position before we returned to Israel. I immediately went to Yerusholayim and entered the Rebbe’s room with a list of items that I felt needed clarity. The Rebbe read the kvital whispering in his usual undertone the various items and then made a gesture with his hand dismissing all my questions. “With hatzlacha” was his brocha, and with that I was set on the path that has kept me in England ever since. Allow me to share one more tidbit to this tale. On the night before we were leaving for Manchester I went with my son, who was then about 15 years old, to receive a last brocha from the tzadik. In his unique way, the Rebbe looked up at me and asked, “where are you going?” “ Er, Manchester” I haltingly answered. “Manchester, why are you going to Manchester?” Now I could hear my heart thumping, “for the rabbonus,” I answered in a hoarse voice. The Rebbe cupped his ear, saying, “I don't hear, what did you say? Savlonus (patience) ahhh rabbonus, with hatzlacha rabbah!”

To say that South Manchester synagogue would fit the category of pashute Yidden may not seem a fair appraisal of the situation, but the Lev Simcha lived for such Yidden as well as his firedika Chassidim and he obviously felt they could use a bit of chassidishe flavour in their midst. I served that congregation for twenty-five years, and I found that with a bit of savlonous Yidden can touch one another’s hearts way beyond the artificial walls we build between us.

As the three-week period winds down, and we share in a special Shabbos of Nachumah, we should take to heart all that the three weeks were meant to teach us. All Yidden are holy, and we are all bound together with the eternal soul of Avrohom AINU. Ours is a people with a calling, that being the clarion objective of bringing Kidush Hashem into our reality. Poshita Yidden, chassidishe chevre, Yeshivisher learners, we are all together. Sefard, Ashkenaz, Chabad and so much more, history has given us so many pathways to Sinai, but the pavement must be paved with non-judgmental Ahavas Yisroel. We have waited for so long, we face so much pain and trials, yet the answer lies within each of us. Hold onto our oneness and never let go. The Moshiach awaits us at the Gates, we need to just turn the key of acceptance to hasten His arrival.

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