Jewish Tribune – Rosh Hashana

**Dip the Apple and Plant the Seeds**

One of the most symbolic and widely known customs of the year, is dipping a piece of apple into honey on Rosh Hashana. There are many reasons for this minhag and I want to share a simple and beautiful idea that I saw in Rabbi Paysach Krohn’s sefer “Yamim Noraim with the Maggid”.

Rabbi Krohn quotes a sentence from Rebbetzen Chavi Wagschal’s “Facing Adversity with Faith”:

“Any fool can count the seeds in one apple, but only Hashem can count all the apples in one seed.”

At this auspicious time of year, as we hold the piece of apple in our hands, we are reminded of the power of potential, of seeds that we hope to plant in the coming year. Seeds that will generate innumerable fruit and ripples of sweetness in the months and years ahead.

Sitting around the Rosh Hashana table, we are reminded that anyone can count the seeds in the apple in front of us, but only Hashem can count all the apples that can come from one seed. The minhag is a silent tefillah that we be blessed with opportunity to sow seeds in the year ahead whose fruit will reap long term benefits.

Rabbi Mordechai Green was a young rabbi of Congregation Adas Yisroel in Hamilton, Canada. The shul only had fifty members who were mostly elderly as the youngsters were moving away from the city into the suburbs. It seemed that the small orthodox shul had no future.

But Rabbi Green was ambitious and had a burning desire to build a large and beautiful shul to attract the youngsters and bring back those who were leaving orthodox Judaism.

The twenty-five-year-old rabbi walked into the Hamilton branch of the Royal Bank of Canada and asked to speak to the manager. Not before too long, Rabbi Green found himself sitting in a plush chair opposite Mr Amie, the bank manager, a tall Episcopalian man.

“I need your help,” began Rabbi Green with a confidence of someone who believed in his cause. “I want to build a synagogue and I need a $500,000 mortgage.”

“What kind of synagogue do you want to build, Rabbi?” Mr Amie asked.

“I am an Orthodox rabbi and I want to build an Orthodox synagogue,” Rabbi Green answered proudly.

Mr Amie leaned forward in his chair and placed his elbows on the desk, cupping his head in his hands. He stared at Rabbi Green for a long time without saying a word. Rabbi Green sat still, staring back. He thought he saw tears welling up in Mr Amie’s eyes. Finally, Mr Amie said in a soft, friendly voice, “I am going to help you, Rabbi. I am going to give you the mortgage.”

Then, with a small smile, Mr Amie said, “But first I want to tell you why I am going to help you.”

“Many years ago, in the 1920’s I was a child growing up in Timmins, Ontario, nearly 500 miles north of here. My father died in a fire and my mother was left alone with five orphans: me any my four siblings. We were penniless and my mother struggled to keep the family afloat.

“There was a general grocery store in Timmins, owned by an Orthodox Jew named Sam Bucovetsky. He was known for his many acts of kindness.

“One day he came to our house and said to my mother, ‘As long as I own this store, you and your family will always have food. You come into my store and take whatever you need. I will never ask you for money and you can pay me whenever you wish.’”

Mr Amie continued, “I will never forget the kindness of Sam Bucovetsky. His benevolence helped us get back on our feet. Decades have passed since then and I have always wanted to repay this extraordinary kindness. When you said you were Orthodox, like Sam Bucovetsky, I knew that G-d had sent you.”

Not before too long, the mortgage was secured, the shul was built and it stands today, over 60 years later, led by Rabbi Green’s son, Daniel, who succeeded his father in 2002.

Now consider this. The countless hours of Torah, tefillah and chesed that have taken place in Congregation Adas Yisroel, Hamilton, Canada, for 65 years will be to the eternal credit of a wonderful sensitive act of chesed of Sam Bucovetsky.

Chazal tell us that even those who have died and passed on from this world are judged on Rosh Hashana (see Rosh Hashana 16b with meforshim).

How can this be? They have left this world and already had their yom hadin when they died? They are unable to perform mitzvos or do aveiros in the next world!

The answer is that no one lives in a vacuum. We generate ripples in our lifetime that continue long after we die. Both positive and negative. What we daven for on Rosh Hashana is to plant seeds that bear fruit that create eternal ripples. That is what Sam Bucovetsky did and that is what we allude to and hope for when we dip the apple in the honey.

“Any fool can count the seeds in one apple, but only Hashem can count all the apples in one seed.”

Wishing all readers a kesiva v’chasima tova.

**Rabbi Golker is the** **Menahel of Hasmonean Boys School and Hasmonean Girls School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**