



A FISHY BUSINESS HARAV Y. REUVEN RUBIN

I'm a fish enthusiast, and I don't mean just the ones you find on your Shabbos plate wearing a carrot on its head. I have always enjoyed watching these creatures of the deep as they live out their ballet of grace in a well-maintained fish tank. For the uninitiated, gazing upon an aquarium filled with thriving specimens can bring calm and focus to a harried mind. They swim about following a program unknown to us but imbedded by the Eibishter, as is all else in the world. Like everything that exists in Hashem's creation, we mere humans are meant to learn important lessons from whatever we experience in this world we find ourselves in. So let me share a bit more about my aquatic example.

Most fish tanks have a decor that acts as the fish's home environment. Each fish has its own space, its territory. As it grows, it learns that this is its home and will defend this space at all costs. How then does one add new fish into a stabilised aquarium? Before the new comers are added, the hobbyist rearranges the rocks and other items that make up the tank's scenery. With this small trick, all the fish find themselves on equal footing (sorry for the pun) and each one has to find a fresh new territory.

I have seen this many times, after all I have been the landlord for many a fish over the years. They swim about and somehow, they find a new space and life in fish world ticks on.

All this springs to mind as we start to reenter the world of our everyday after all the isolations, and



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lockdowns we have been touched by. For over a year we have followed rules and regulations that often placed us outside our personal comfort zone. Masks ever at the ready we tried to find our space in an often-jangled scenario. For me nothing showed this more than this Shevuos. For the first time since Golus Corona came into our lives, we were able to open our Shtieble to almost the regular pre lockdown setting. Till now people were sitting far apart, often in different rooms, with our ladies' section closed so as to allow several 'family bubbles' to take part in the davening. Kidushim were a distant memory, and Shalos Seudos was celebrated sitting distanced with no food. As the olam arrived on Yom tov I immediately saw the problem, after over a year, people were hesitant, they weren't sure exactly about the new configuration of seating and where 'their' makom was. Some of this was because the layout of the main shtieble had changed a bit. However, in truth we are all a bit misplaced, trying to find our way forwards yet wary of moving too quickly. We live with a cloud around us, it may be hidden from time to time, but it is there. Covid caused us all fear and upset. The tragedy of Meron stabs at everyone's heart, and then, as Shevuos arrived sweet neshomalach in Karlin Stolin fell to their deaths.

We swim about in a world that has changed, its features changed. This is the golus Hashem has placed us in, so it is our task to find our individual makom amidst the new waters of challenge.

It is the Eibishter's rotzon for us to rise to the occasion, find our place and grow closer to Hashem. Things can't slide back to what was called "normal", if anything is clear it is this. We feel the constant onslaught of difficulties, so we must turn closer to Hashem with our tfilos and mitzvos. Our davening must be with more urgency, and our chesed for one another must expand.

The fish swim in their waters, coping with whatever rocks are put in their path. We too are being asked to swim in our waters, and with positive betochin in Hashem, we will persevere and grow. We all await the coming of the Moshiach, may it be soon, and may we all swim in the safe waters of Hashem's illumination with hope and invigorating strength.