

Nourishment for the Neshama

<http://lvracha.com>

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

Ahavas Yisrael and Pesach - A Step by Step Guide to Reflecting the Divine Reality

Based on the notes from Higher Order of Pesach by Rabbi Labinsky
<http://www.jerusalemradio.com/wordpress/author/ylabinsky/>
by Shuli Kleinman

As I stretch beyond my comfort zone, I see that I am also spiritually growing. What is actually happening to create that? How can I best come to comprehend the spiritual growth I feel I am achieving through acts of ahavas yisrael each time I stretch beyond my comfort zone? Much insight can be gained from the studying the basics of Pesach and our movement from enslavement to freedom.

We learn that giving others a warm smile, making a call to someone and reach out have a huge impact on others and ourselves, acts of ahavas yisrael that are building zechusim for Klal Yisrael. How specifically do such actions create the spiritual growth?

Let's look at the neshama of our acts of ahavas yisrael. It is not always natural or easy or a light thing to do. In fact, it can be quite a hard thing to do. Sometimes we are behaving totally contrary to our feelings and we have to rise above our reactions, breaking ourselves.

Passover is the time of our going out of Egypt, from enslavement to freedom. An important way to comprehend this journey from enslavement to freedom is to see a theme that helps us go from a strong body orientation of the world to a strong spiritual orientation of the world in our lives and in everything we do, including ahavas yisrael. At Pesach time, we want to increase the proportionality of spirituality and decrease the proportionality of a strong body orientation. The opportunity that Pesach offers us is a process that we access internally each time we rise above our initial reactions and respond with ahavas yisrael.

Looking more deeply to discover more insights, chometz symbolizes anivos (from the word ani) selfishness, self-hood, self-orientation, egocentricity- the I. This is embodied in chometz which we can understand by comprehending the difference between chometz and matza. Matza symbolizes our nefesh elokish, our sense of Gdliness. However, the only difference between chometz and matza is the time process to produce it. 18 minutes is matza. Anything more than that gives the ingredients the ability to take up more time and space, to leaven. When we as people allow our egos to take up more time and space than what humility calls for, we have entered into the world of ego, self-hood, anivos as symbolized by chometz.

How many of our interactions with others, or our lack of interaction with others, boils down to our valuing our hurt feelings – perhaps to an extent more than Hashem would see as good and right in His eyes?

The Maharal says the difference between chometz and matza is only time. How many times when our emotions are involved has our feelings of self importance crept in? With matza, there is no possibility for the self to expand at all. Matza is the root of humility because it exists just enough to exist but no more, only to reflect the Gdly reality but not to exist for its own sake. That is the difference between matza

and chometz.

Yet what happens when our feelings are hurt? We react. Is it because we are self-interested or perhaps because we are insecure? Many times, our feelings get hurt and we fail in a situation not because we have over-inflated egos, but because our egos are unhealthy in some regard. It is urgent to comprehend that we can't give up our egos to reflect a Divine image unless we have a healthy ego. Hashem wants us to have a healthy ego, but only for the sake of sacrificing it to Him!

This is where we struggle and this is what could be the cause of a lack of ahavas yisrael in many situations. To succeed with ahavas yisrael, we should first take a very fractured, deficient ego and get a health sense of self. knowing who we are, what our attributes are, our beautiful qualities along with our limitations and being honest with it and own it and feeling good about our ego. That is a healthy sense of self. Then, from that place of inner security, we can choose to reflect the Divine image within us instead. The mere sense of selfhood can take up unnecessarily more time and space than it needs to. When we access the dimension of matza (representing our yearning-to- be- free- -from-egocentrism nefesh elokim) which is our dominant spiritual self, we access our ability to live a self-reflective reality of Gd and bring His light into the world. This is the root of our Jewish identity and in a real sense the root of ahavas yisrael, because we and every Jew are connected to Gd in this same way. We can instead choose to meld ourselves with Gd - our sense of selfhood is meant to reflect Gdly reality, not our reality. That is the distinguishing point between chametz and matza, rising and not rising, being in a state of the sense of self reflecting Divine reality in this world. Our ego is relegated to the bare essential minimum and no more. If we think we are a force to be reckoned with in any way, we edge Gd out by inflating the ego.

Here is a simple step by step description:

How to take a very fractured, deficient ego and get a health sense of self and then move toward reflecting the reality of Gd into this world.

1. Knowing who we are, what our attributes are, our beautiful qualities along with our limitations and being honest with it and own it and feeling good about our ego. That is a healthy sense of self.
2. Then, from that place of inner security, we can choose to reflect the Divine image within us instead. This is what we want to be the dominant part of our internal composition. We must go to 1 first by owning both good qualities and limitations and feeling good about understanding ourself and our challenges.
3. The mere sense of selfhood can take up unnecessarily more time and space than it needs to. IF WE DON'T HAVE HEALTHY EGO, OUR UNHEALTHY EGO TAKES UP TOO MUCH TIME AND SPACE Go to 1, with an eye on going to 2 so that 1 doesn't become dominant.

When we access the dimension of matza, our diminished dominant spiritual self, it is the self-reflective reality of Gd in the world. WITH A HEALTHY EGO, IT IS NOT A THREAT TO US TO INSTEAD REFLECT GD'S REALITY INTO THE WORLD

The first three cups are designed to knock out the three aspects of enslavement, to uproot our self-involvement. The fourth cup is a whole different dimension. When the Jews left Egypt they weren't fully free. They still had psychological enslavement. When they saw the waters on top of them after they crossed to the other side, what happened is that it broke the psychological enslavement which was the final stage to be free. We are free to rise above our bodily emotions and feelings and act with ahavas yisrael toward each other and, when we do, we are using our self to reflect Divine reality. So doing brings great light to the world and creates connection for all of us.

