

MORE AND MORE OURSELVES

by Rabbi Label Lam

And an angel of HASHEM called to him and said, "Avraham / Avraham!" And he said, "Here I am!" (Breishis 22:11)

Avraham/ Avraham: It's an expression of dearness that he doubled his name. (Rashi)

It's quite reasonable that Avraham was spoken to affectionately at that moment. He had just demonstrated his willingness to bend his own will in favor of The Almighty's in the most dramatic fashion ever. How is it, though, that repeating a name expresses dearness?

Every once and a while, in the spring, I am inspired to plant some different types of flowers. I happen to have a particular attraction to the elegant "sunflower". On the shelf, at the nursery, are these little packets with colorful pictures of clusters of fully developed sunflowers. That's usually enough of a lure to get me to buy some. Ever hopeful I push a bunch of seeds into the earth and wait for the happy results.

After a few days little heads have begun to peek out from the soil. Weeks later the necks are starting to stretch to the heavens. Not soon after this stage I have most often met with great disappointment. The plants usually begin to bend and bow penitently before falling back to the ground.

I look forward to the day when I will gaze out into the garden and behold: The sunflower emerging from the good earth actually matches the picture on that packet attached to the stick. Then I'll shout with glee, "Sunflower!" while admiring the towering flower and then again "Sunflower!" as I perceive its perfect likeness to the picture on the outside of the packet. It's a match!

The Zohar explains that a person's name is doubled when they actualize their potential. When the picture of what the person could be is mirrored by what the person is, then the name is repeated as an expression of endearment.

The Rambam writes in his "Laws of Teshuva" that any person can become righteous like Moses. A person's spiritual height, not like physical height is a function of how one exercises their free will and not a determined fact of life. Can anyone reach the stature of Moshe? The Torah tells us explicitly that there will never again be another prophet like Moshe. His unique greatness will remain forever unmatched. What does the Rambam mean?

Before it became popular a friend of mine in yeshiva was busy stirring some green health- mix while others were busy with their toast and coffee. A fellow approached this petite pal of mine and asked

him crudely, "Do you think you're healthier than us?" My friend gave such a sweet and poignant reply, "No, but I am lot healthier than I used to be!"

No one is expected to be Moshe or Avraham. Each mined out the best of what was coded into the seeds of their beings. As we read about Avraham's amazing achievement at the "Akeida", on Rosh HaShana it may be worthwhile to remember that we are not being asked to be better or holier than anybody else on the planet but we are being urged by a pleading Shofar and the steady beat of the clock to become more and more ourselves.

Good Shabbos!

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