

EVEN CLOSER TO HASHEM

by Rabbi Label Lam

You shall follow after HASHEM your G-d, and Him you shall fear and His Mitzvos you shall keep and to His voice you should hearken and Him shall you serve and to Him you should cleave. (Devarim 13:5)

To Him shall you cleave: Cleave to His ways; Acts of Kindliness, burying the dead, visiting the sick, like The Holy One Blessed Be He does. (Rashi)

Rashi is troubled by the problem of how we are to attach ourselves to HASHEM. Obviously it is not a physical attachment but a matter of emulation. Rashi offers a short list and a general heading that we should do as HASHEM does. Therefore we can look for other areas that are listed as doings and characteristics of The Almighty.

In the Siddur-Prayer book we find multiple examples of extra ways that we can try to emulate: Healer of the sick, teacher of Torah to Israel, dresses the naked, taking care of needs, good to all, patient, merciful, loves the righteous, gives bread to the hungry, supports the fallen, protects widows, orphans and strangers, chooses His people Israel with love, gracious to forgive, gathers together the pushed off of His people Israel, loves charity and justice, supports the righteous, builds Jerusalem, listens to sincere petitions, returns the Shechinah to Zion, shines His face, makes peace, does what He says, pays well those who fear G-d, redeems and saves and protects, provides for all graciously.

A story is told about a professor who was walking down Madison Avenue while feeling more than a little blue when he saw a shingle for a psychiatrist's office. He entered and was confronted by two doors. A sign by one read "introvert" and the other "extrovert" after a brief moment of introspective reflection he entered the door marked "introvert". Then he was confronted by another series of choices. One door was titled, "Makes over \$100,000.00" the other "Makes less than \$100,000.00". That was much easier to figure. A teacher doesn't make that much so he went through the door marked "under \$100,000." and found himself back on Madison Avenue.

HASHEM nourishes the entire world "with His goodness, with favor, with kindness and with mercy" and ostensibly for free. What an abundance of opportunities we have! Whatever we are already doing, if it is done with the intention of emulating HASHEM there's a chance to add an extra dimension of depth to our lives. A mother who is already dressing her baby or a feeding her young, a teacher who is exercising patience, or supporter of Israel who is writing checks might want to have in

mind some part of the partial list above and to see if there is some way to add some zesty flavor to already good living.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl. pointed out that two places in the Torah we are commanded to "cleave". "Therefore a man should leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife..." (Breishis 3:24) And here we are bidden to cleave to HASHEM. He asks a question of dual loyalty. How can we have two full time jobs of 24/7? How can we be so absolutely dutiful and committed to a spouse and at the same time devoted to HASHEM?

The answer will be made obvious. The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" for man and woman have two common letters. Alef and Shin. They each have two different letters. Yud and Heh. The Talmud tells us that when there is peace between them the Shechina (Divine Presence) resides between them. The Yud and Heh spell HASHEM's name. When there is no peace G-dliness escapes. What remains is aleph-shin -AISH/fire. Therefore the attachment that they both have to HASHEM is the real glue that binds them together. By emulating The Almighty one can hope to grow nearer to another while drawing even closer to HASHEM. Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.