

# THE RICH FLAVOR OF ACHIEVEMENT

by Rabbi Label Lam

*And they went and they did, the Children of Israel, just as HASHEM had commanded Moshe and Aaron so they did!* (Shemos 12:28)

*They went and they did:* The verse credits them even for their going, giving reward for their going as well as for the doing. (Rashi)

I always wondered why when some people go to do something it takes on some superlative value and when others (like me) would do the same thing it seemed like no big deal. Let's take an example or two. Some people raise money for a cause and to them it is the most important thing in the universe to be doing. Another feels burdened by embarrassment and goes about the same business with a heaviness.

I remember being stuck in traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge, with one of my Rebbeim, while driving to the wedding of a student. I was feeling the increase of frustration as the only thing that moved was the clock. We were definitely going to miss the Chupah! Then, with an enthusiastic tone my Rebbe chimed in, "Of all the cars on this bridge, we're probably on the way to do the most important thing!" It was amazing to behold his child-like enthusiasm and how it affected and transformed even our present state. How did he do that?

I once heard of a fellow who had an unusually good rapport with his son. A friend who had observed this phenomenon asked him how he managed to have bonded so nicely with his boy. The answer he gave was not easy to understand at first. He said, "2.7" What did that mean? He explained that when he started to keep Shabbos he lived 2.7 miles from Shul. He would walk back and forth numerous times each Shabbos with his boy in tow, just the two of them.

At first it was boring and tedious but after a number of times they started to talk and make observations about things they saw and experienced during the week and during the walk. The conversations grew and so did their relationship. That's why he owes the success of their closeness to 2.7.

We find from the earliest moments of history that The Almighty had commanded that a "fruit-tree" sprout forth and yet a "tree bearing fruit" was manifest. What was this ideal "fruit-tree"? Our sages tell us that it was a tree whose wood tasted like the fruit itself. What appeared instead was a tree as we know it with a tasteless wood that delivers a fruit. What is the difference between the two?

There are many things we do that can be experienced as merely means to end. I get a car so I can get a job, so I can pay my bills, so I can afford to have a car to keep my job to pay by bills ad. absurdum....ad. nausium. Until it connects with a real goal that is an end in itself then it is always only a means and that's when things grow tiresome and wearisome and tasteless like wood. However when there's a real goal like getting to Shul while preserving the integrity and sanctity of the day then "getting there" can be as productive and meaningful "being there".

We find the same thing when the Jewish People were finally given specific instructions about the taking of the Pesach Lamb in Egypt. The Torah teaches us, just then, that their going to do the Mitzvah was considered merit-worthy just as the doing of the Mitzvah itself. While collecting charity for a noble cause or going to a wedding, the one with his eye on the Mitzvah, never tires. This is because it is possible to taste even in the in the most pedestrian of means the rich flavor of achievement. Text Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.