

THE REAL US!

by Rabbi Label Lam

Here's a new definition that certainly sheds light on an older than old subject. Why is -Pesach called "Pesach"? The Sefas Emes quoting a generic source cites that Pesach is actually a contraction of two words: "Peh"- mouth and "Sach"- speaks. How does that enhance our Seder or observance of Pesach? He explains that through the exodus from Egypt our mouths were opened and we were able to sing to and praise HASHEM out loud, as by the splitting of the sea. Prior to that we were not only enslaved to Pharaoh's forces bodily but we were blocked and unable to express our true spiritual nature. Only later, through the leaving of Egypt did we discover our authentic voices. Our mouths, so to speak, were in Exile! How can a mouth be in exile?

In the spirit the verse, "In order that you should remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life" I will recall days in High School, in public school when there were those occasional events they called, "dances"! I have to admit I didn't understand the screaming "hard rock" music and my feet did not feel much like dancing. I remember not feeling entirely comfortable doing what everyone else was doing but under duress, the pressure of social coercion I did try. The memory of the feeling of incongruity, that I was missing something and there was perhaps something wrong with me remains with me till today.

Years later at a Jewish event, in Yeshiva, after overcoming the initial aversion to holding men's hands I found out, much to my surprise, just how natural and genuinely fun it is to dance in circles, to music that matched the temperament of my soul. It was certainly more akin to how my feet felt comfortable expressing themselves. No, I have not become a professional dancer since nor do I have any plans to do so but I do feel better about myself looking back at the old days understanding it was a good thing or at least it wasn't a bad thing that I didn't "get it", what that music was all about. It just wasn't me! This is now is me!

The same principle applies to patterns of speech as well. We just may find ourselves hemmed in and feeling woefully confined by the acceptable limits of the society around us. We are publicly apologetic and privately ashamed to mention anything "too Jewish" or to speak of any matter that places the status of the Jewish People on any differing plain higher or lower. We may begin to realize that we are so afraid to offend and we should be that we fail to inspire even ourselves.

There's an old Chinese proverb I saw in a poetry book that says, "Read a 100 poems and write like a

100 poets. Read a1000 poems and write like yourself!" How true! It's hard for the poet "to find his voice", but there is something to be said for finding the voice that best approximates your own to help you until you find the key to your own heart and the master key to others.

Along comes Pesach and the Seder and with the experience of the Haggada we are lead (A Naggid is a leader) by words to the point where, with the help of four cups of wine, we are singing and crying with hearts full of endless joy as little children sitting on the lap of our Father. It's quite a profound change from that sober and measured awkwardness that immediately preceded the Seder before we found our voices and our mouths were liberated once again as never before. Understanding that Pesach is "Peh" - mouth "Sach"- speaks teaches us- this is **the real us!**
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