

TAKING IT PERSONALLY

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Pesach

Taking It Personally

By Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden

Pesach (Passover) is filled with opportunities to renew and fortify our relationship with G-d. The Torah has sixteen mitzvos (Divine commandments) to perform throughout this holiday and the oral Torah includes hundreds of details clarifying these commandments. The primary purpose of all these observances is to relive the miracles that took place during our Exodus from Egypt. Secondly, as fulfilling these charges makes the events of 3316 years ago real to us, we are aroused within with feelings of freedom. Since all of these commandments operate within the same framework, why does G-d instruct us to do all of them? Could we not remember the Exodus and teach it to our children with just one of these commandments?

Sefer Hachinuch (1) elaborates this mitzvah utilizing a concept foundational to the study of Torah and the observance of the commandments. A person's heart and mind always follow his actions, whether they are good or bad. And actions are much more easily and readily consciously regulated than thoughts and feelings. The most evil person who pushes himself to do acts of kindness - even if he does not feel love or motivation to do chesed in his heart - will, slowly over time, change into being a kind person. One can also train himself in the opposite as well. A righteous person forced into doing evil acts will find his mind follows and he turns to being evil.

The Pesach Hagada narrative informs us, "A person is obligated to see himself as though he himself came out of Egypt." It is not enough to simply remember and discuss the events; we need to feel elated with the genuine feeling of freedom as though we are being rescued right now. How do we, so many years later, especially those of us living in the Diaspora, relate to the feeling of emancipation from slavery? The wealth of mitzvos that contain opportunities to relive the experiences and experience the emotions enable us to transform Pesach. The Exodus will not longer be merely an event of the past, but a living experience in the present that will metamorphose our future.

Have a Chag Kosher v'Samayach.

(1) The Book of Mitzvah Education, mitzvah 16

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