

The Critical Role of Emotions

פרשת אמר

Often our daily activities are performed by rote and lack the proper feelings and emotions. We tend to view this lack as a deficiency in our Mitzvah performance. From this week's Parsha, the Sefer Hachinuch (298) shares with us an insight that this lack of proper emotions not only impacts the quality of the Mitzvah, but it impacts the receptivity to the message within it as well.

The Sefer Hachinuch, in explaining the Mitzvah to not do Melacha on the first day of Pesach, says, "The purpose of the Mitzvah is to enable us to remember the great miracles Hashem performed for us and our fathers, and speak about them to our children and grandchildren. Through resting from Melacha we will be free to engage in this. However, if we were allowed to do Melacha, even light ones, we would be focused on the Melacha, and the honor of the Yom Tov will be forgotten." At first glance the Sefer Hachinuch seems to be saying that the purpose of resting from Melacha is purely pragmatic. Through resting we will have time to focus, and if we were allowed to do Melacha we would not be focused. However, through reading the Sefer Hachinuch more thoroughly, one would see that this is not the case. He says that the problem with doing Melacha is that it will detract from the honor of the day. Not that practically speaking you will be focused on your work and not the miracles of Mitzrayim, but by doing Melacha, one will feel like this day is like any other, which will result in him not giving this day the proper value and importance.

"The honor we accord to Shabbos is not only a fulfillment of כבוד שבת, but it also enables us to properly focus and absorb the message of Emunah that is the essence of Shabbos."

It seems that the Sefer Hachinuch is saying that a critical ingredient in being able to focus and be receptive to the message of Pesach, is having the proper respect and honor for the Yom Tov. It is through this feeling of value that we will be able to properly focus on the message of the miracles of Egypt.

We can extend this idea to Shabbos. Seforim say, "Being ready early is part of honoring Shabbos." Based on this Sefer HaChinuch, the honor we accord to Shabbos is not only a fulfillment of כבוד שבת, but it also enables us to properly focus and absorb the message of Emunah that is the essence of Shabbos.

We find a similar idea expressed by the Sefer Hachinuch (302) regarding the Mitzvah of bringing the Korban Omer on the second day of Pesach. The Sefer HaChinuch writes, "That the purpose of this Mitzvah is so that through this action, we focus on Hashem's great kindness to his creations, of giving them food to eat every year, etc. We are commanded to do this on the second day of Pesach and not the first, so that we do not mix one joy with another. The first day is designated to remember the great miracles of going out of Egypt, when we were taken out from slavery to freedom and from sorrow to joy." It sounds like the issue with bringing the Korban Omer on the first day of Pesach, is not that it will detract from one's ability to focus on the great miracles of Egypt. Perhaps one can properly focus on both the miracles of Egypt, and Hashem kindness of providing food every year, at the same time. However the issue seems to be that by focusing on both together, there will be a lack in the arena of joy. Instead of the joy and happiness being fully about the miracles of Egypt, it will be intermingled with feelings of joy for the Korban Omer. It seems from the Sefer HaChinuch that since this day is designated to focus on the great miracles of Egypt, it is essential to this focus that there is joy, and that this joy is solely focused on the miracles of Egypt.

We can extrapolate from here an important lesson in regards to Mitzvah observance. Our feelings and emotions are integral in allowing us to focus and absorb the message of our actions. Therefore, it is necessary to learn Mussar and refine our middos.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לעילוי נשמת רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה
לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא