

A addendum of mine (JHB) to our colleague Reuven Hammer's article in the Jerusalem Post, October-07 entitled **The Chosen People**.

Hammer writes;

The idea of the "chosen people" is one of the most controversial concepts in Judaism and also one of the most basic. It is articulated quite clearly in the Torah and repeated countless times in our prayers. Probably the most well known example of that is the blessing recited when one has an aliyah to the Torah: ...who has chosen us from all the peoples and given us the Torah. Some groups within Judaism have found this so offensive that they have changed the wording of this blessing in their prayer books. The Reconstructionist Movement, for example, introduced instead the formula "who has brought us close to Your service..." Their objection, obviously, is that chosenness implies superiority and therefore teaches a doctrine not dissimilar from that of "the master race."

There is no problem being The Chosen People as long as we are also The Choosing People.

"Chosenness" is not one sided, and confers no special benefit. It evolves in, and is a product of relationship. It is an outcome of choosing and being chosen.

Ingrid (my yekkeh rebbetzin-light of my life) is my chosen one and she lets me know in so many ways that I am hers. Our "chosenness" relationship brings special obligations and responsibilities (n.b.) the word *response*) committing each and both of us who have "voluntarily" chosen, to make the other, the chosen one, special and unique in our lives. We are duty-bound to acknowledge and honor by how we conduct ourselves

in relationship to bring special care, love and concern to our behavior. In relation to each other we are each of us special or we might even dare say, “elected”.

This does not mean that my “Ex” or Ingrid’s “Ex” is inherently less equal, or in any way inferior. Nor conversely, does our enjoying our relationship more than we did our former “chosen” ones imply in any way that we are intrinsically better than they or any others.

If we pay *any* attention at all, we know that humans are *different in different* relationships. And it is *the relationship that makes the difference*, not how one or the other of the partners really “*are*”. As I have written elsewhere (Reform Judaism – Fall 2007)“change comes out of relationship. And relationship is a sometimes thing.”

So Chosen People comes out of our God Relationship, which is at least two ways. One way of thinking of Mitzvah is of its roots in Tzevet and of the obligations we undertake as a result of our God-Relationship- to both our God-partner and the world in which both we and God live.