

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על פני האדמה

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

Picture Perfect

בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֱתָ הָאָדָם

In the image of G-d He made man.

(Bereishis 9:6)

R. Meir of Amshinov once attended a meeting at the home of the *chassid* R. Avraham Trager. After the meeting's conclusion, as he stood up to leave, the Rebbe noticed a portrait hanging on the wall. He asked the *ba'al habayis*,

large photo prints were rare and highly valuable.) The Rebbe returned the smile. "It's yours, you say? Let's take a walk outside and ask people whose picture it is. What do you think they'll say?"

This story drove home a lesson for me. As our pasuk states, Hashem created man in His image. This is mentioned also in the *sheva berachos*: אשר יצר את - He Who fashioned man in His image. What does our *tzelem Elokim* have to do with marriage? When a man gets married, he might think, *I'm not a boy anymore; I'm my own boss. I've got the keys to my own house and must fend for myself and my family. Nobody will tell me what to do.* The Ribbono shel Olam replies, "Do you think it's your portrait? It's My portrait; you are a *tzelem Elokim*! Take great care of My portrait; make sure not to damage it."

Mankind is the only creation to possess *bechirah*; even *malachim* cannot operate by their own will. It is in this realm that we share a resemblance with Hashem. We must remember: it is not our picture, it's His picture. We must be careful with our choices.

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Taken Care Of

וַיֵּרַד ה' לְרִאֲתָא אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְנֵי הָאָדָם

Hashem descended to look at the city and tower which the sons of man built. (Bereishis 11:5)

The *mesorah* links three *pesukim* which contain the phrase *הָאָדָם בְּנֵי*, our pasuk and two *pesukim* in Tehillim: רָאָה ה', רָאָה ה' - *From heaven Hashem looks down, He sees all mankind* (33:13), and *לְהוֹדִיעַ לְגִבּוֹרֵתָיו* - *To inform human beings of His mighty deeds* (145:12).

These three *pesukim* share the theme of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* over mankind. All *הָאָדָם בְּנֵי*, all people, must recognize and internalize that they are under Hashem's individual watch and guidance. Let us explore how this lesson is expressed in these *pesukim*.

Rashi⁹ cites the rationale behind the actions of the *dor haflagah*. The people believed that the world would be destroyed fifteen hundred years after Creation. They felt that their actions could prevent this. What was their mistake? They overlooked the fact that the world is run and managed by Hashem. It was not their business to try and ensure the world's continuity. In short, they lacked belief in Hashem's *hashgachah*.

גבורות גבורתיו hints at *לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרָתוֹ*, Hashem's great power of controlling

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If one keeps his *yiras Shamayim* in the attic, waiting for a time of *nisayon*, it may be too late by the time he brings it down and dusts it off.

"Which *tzaddik* is in this picture?" Muddled, the *chassid* replied, "Rebbe, it's your portrait!" The Rebbe thought for a moment, and then promptly removed the photograph from its frame, rolled it up, and placed it in his pocket. He began to leave. The *chassid* hurriedly caught up with him. "Rebbe," he said with a smile, "I believe it's my picture." (In those days,

Picture Perfect

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וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחִתָּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ – *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth* (9:2). What do these two expressions of fear refer to? *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that מוֹרָאֲכֶם refers to one's *yiras Shamayim*, while חִתָּכֶם refers to the dread he casts upon wildlife. Commensurate with the fear of Heaven one brings upon himself is the fear the animal world will have for him.¹ Indeed, we know stories of *tzaddikim* throughout the ages who cast a spell of dread upon vicious animals.

Although nowadays we don't often encounter wild beasts, there is a different type of vicious creature residing in each one of us: the *yetzer hara*. The Gemara (Yoma 69b) relates that the *yetzer hara* once took the form of a fiery lion.² A vicious beast indeed.³ How can one tame this frightening creature? The greater one's "מוֹרָאֲכֶם," one's *yiras Shamayim*, the more he sharpens his *tzelem Elokim*, and the greater will be his "חִתָּכֶם," his spell of dread upon all creatures, including the *yetzer hara*. He will then have the power to overcome his *nisyonos*.

One must keep his *yiras Shamayim* within reach at all times. If one keeps his *yiras Shamayim* in the attic, waiting for a time of *nisayon*, it may be too late by the time he brings it down and dusts it off. If Chazal say⁴ that one constantly

feels for his wallet, how much more so must one constantly keep tabs on his *yiras Shamayim*. As we say in davening, לעוֹלָם יִהְיֶה אָדָם יֹרֵא שְׁמַיִם – *One should be fearful of Heaven at all times*.

A person must first be cognizant and gain awareness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and then develop *yiras Shamayim* and remain focused on it. *Yiras Shamayim*, maintaining fear of Hashem, is one of the six constant mitzvos. One who does not do so is at risk of being attacked and defeated by the beast within.

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּכְתֶּם אֶת הַשְּׂמֵלָה – *And Shem and Yefes took a garment* (9:23). Rashi cites a Midrash⁵ that notes the unusual wording, וַיִּקַּח, *he took*, in the singular form; why doesn't it say וַיִּקְחוּ, in the plural? The Midrash explains that the 'taking' was primarily Shem's, because he exerted himself for this mitzvah more than Yefes. For this reason, Shem was awarded the mitzvah of *tzitzis*, while Yefes was rewarded with his descendants' future burial, as the pasuk says (Yechezkel 39:11), אֶתֵּן לְגוֹג מְקוֹם קְבֹרָה – *I will assign Gog a burial site there*.

How do these rewards reflect the respective actions? *Shem MiShmuel*⁶ cites his father, the Avnei Nezer, who explained as follows. Yefes outwardly mimicked the actions of Shem and helped him cover their father, but did not invest his *penimiyus* in the mitzvah.

He is therefore given burial, which is also only outward; it is an external act of respect for the external body.⁷ Shem, however, took the original initiative to cover his father, out of deep and heartfelt respect for him. He merited the mitzvah of *tzitzis*, which benefits one's *neshamah*, his deepest essence. As the pasuk says (Bamidbar 15:39-40), וַיִּרְאֵינִי אֶתְּוֹרֵי אֶחָדִי וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה'... וְלֹא תִתְּוֹרוּ אֶחָדִי לְבַבְכֶם וְאֶחָדִי עֵינֵיכֶם... לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְגו' – *you will see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem... and not explore after your heart and after your eyes... so that you may remember and perform all of My mitzvos...* The mitzvah of *tzitzis* brings one to *yiras Shamayim* as well, as the Gemara⁸ teaches: "Techeiles is reminiscent of the sea, the sea is reminiscent of the heavens, and the heavens are reminiscent of the *Kisei Hakavod*."

A person who fulfills the mitzvah of *tzitzis* and contemplates its lessons will merit Shem's reward: that his descendants will merit this mitzvah as well, bringing forth generations of *tzaddikim* and *ehrliche Yidden*.

(נח תשפ"ג – ס"ג מאמר ב)

1 See also *Agra D'Kallah*

2 See Maharsha; *Yad Ramah*, Sanhedrin 64b

3 See, as well, Eiruvim 78b and Shavuos 22b, אריא הוא דרביע עליה. See also *Ibra D'Dasha*, *Yerach Ha'eisanim*, p. 101 with footnote.

4 Bava Metzvia 22b

5 Tanchuma 15; Bereishis Rabbah 36:6

6 Beshalach 5678; Devarim 5676; Shabbos Chol HaMoed Sukkos 5677 and 5681

7 See Sanhedrin 46b

8 Sotah 17a and Menachos 43b

Rain Date

The halachah is that we begin davening for rain on the seventh day of Cheshvan (in Eretz Yisrael). Before that time, it is forbidden to daven for rain in *Shemoneh Esrei*. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 28a) says that we begin davening for rain on the seventh of Cheshvan so that those who live on the river Peras can get home from Yerushalayim after Sukkos before it rains. As the Gemara says, this was only relevant during the time of the first Beis Hamikdash, when Jews lived that far out. Clearly, the institution of davening for rain at this time dates back at least to the first Beis Hamikdash, before Ezra standardized the text of *Shemoneh Esrei*, and all davening was done in an informal, personal manner.

My son asked: Presumably, if someone nowadays needs rain before the seventh of Cheshvan, he may daven for it outside the framework of *Shemoneh Esrei*. If so, before *Shemoneh Esrei* was standardized, what was the relevance of the prohibition against davening for rain before the seventh of Cheshvan?

In response to this question, Rav Moshe Mordechai Shulsinger suggested that the Gemara might not mean that davening for rain beginning the seventh of Cheshvan had actually been instituted by the time of the first Beis Hamikdash. Perhaps it was only instituted during the second Beis Hamikdash, but the *takanah* was based on the Jewish areas of settlement during the first Beis Hamikdash, in preparation for the return of all of Bnei Yisrael to their land.

This answer seems problematic. Rain is such a vital need for Klal Yisrael that the *kohen gadol* davened especially for it on Yom Kippur. Certainly, Chazal would not have initially instituted to daven for rain in a delayed manner simply as a memorial to the past or an anticipation of the future.

Rav Shulsinger relates that a grandson of Rav Elyashiv told him that he discussed this question with his grandfather. Rav Elyashiv responded that before the *takanah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, there was an obligation to daven for rain when one asked Hashem for one's needs.

We may suggest that before the institution of *Shemoneh Esrei*, the *takanah* of davening for rain starting the seventh of Cheshvan was, essentially, that one *should not* ask Hashem for rain before the seventh of Cheshvan. We may consider, however, whether nowadays, when the *tefillah* for rain is standardized in *Shemoneh Esrei*, the prohibition of making a personal request for rain before the seventh of Cheshvan still stands.

(בנאות דשא – נח תשכ"א)

Spare the Rod

The pasuk states (Yeshayah 54:9), כִּי גַי נַח זָאֵת, לִי – *For [like] the waters of Noach shall this be to me*. Why is the *mabul* referred to as “the waters of Noach”? Wasn't Noach the only one who was spared the *mabul's* destruction? The *Zohar hakadosh* explains¹ that Noach was held at fault for the *mabul*, because he should have davened that the people be spared.

It has been asked:² Why should Noach have davened for his generation? After all, they were wicked people, fully deserving of their punishment. To the contrary, it is difficult to understand why Avraham Avinu davened for the people of Sedom, about whom the pasuk says (Bereishis 13:13), וְאֵנְשֵׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחָטְאִים לָהּ, וְאֵת – *The people of Sedom were wicked and sinful toward Hashem, exceedingly*.

This question has no basis at all. Hashem does not want to destroy His world and bring death to *resha'im*; He much prefers that the wicked do *teshuvah* and be spared punishment. This was certainly so at the time of Noach, when there was no specific *am hanivchar*, and all nations were equal. But even after Bnei Yisrael were chosen as Hashem's people, He still prefers to spare the nations punishment, as the pasuk says (Yonah 4:11), וְאֶנִּי לֹא אֶחֹס עַל נִינְוָה וְגו' – *And I, shall I not take pity upon Ninveh...?* In fact, the *mabul* itself began slowly, so that people might take the opportunity to do *teshuvah*.³

This, then, was the criticism against Noach: He should have davened to Hashem that the people be given more time to awaken and do *teshuvah*. And this, too, was what Avraham davened for when he asked Hashem to spare Sedom: he asked that they be given more opportunity for *teshuvah*.

(בנאות דשא – נח תשכ"א)

1 Vol. 1 67b

2 See *MiPi Sefarim V'Sofrim*

3 See Rashi 7:12