

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

Picture Perfect

בִּצֵלֵם אֵלקים עָשָׂה אֵת 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,

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,

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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 - האדם בצלמו – 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. cont. on page 2

Taken Care Of

וַיֵּרֵד ה' לִרְאֹת אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמִּגְדָל אֲשֶׁר בְּנוּ בְּנֵי האדם

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 בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, our pasuk and two *pesukim* in Tehillim: מִשְׁמִיִם הְבִּיט ה', רַאַה אֶת כָּל הְנֵי הָאָדָם – From heaven Hashem looks down, He sees all mankind (33:13), and לָהוֹדִיע לבני האדם גבורתיו – To inform human beings of His mighty deeds (145:12).

These three *pesukim* share the theme of Hashem's hashgachah pratis over mankind. All בני האדם, 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 hints at לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרֹתָיו גשמים, Hashem's great power of controlling

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ראַכָם וְחַתְּכָם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶך 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 מוֹרְאָכָם refers to one's yiras Shamayim, while חַתְּכָם 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 "מוֹרַאֲכֶם," one's yiras Shamayim, the more he sharpens his tzelem Elokim, and the greater will be his "חָתְכָם," 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, yiras Shamayim. As we say in davening, - סרעולם יהא אדם ירא שמים 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.

אר השָׁמְלָה And Shem אין אָרָה אָת הָשָׁמְלָה And Shem and Yefes took a garment (9:23). Rashi cites a Midrash⁵ that notes the unusual wording, אָיקח, *he took*, in the singular form; why doesn't it say ויקח, 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), אָמָן לְגוּג מְקוֹם שָׁם קֶבֶר - 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), וּרְאִיתֵם אתו וּזְכָרְתֵם אֶת כֵּל מִצְוֹת ה'... וְלא תֵתוּרוּ אַחֵרִי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם... לְמַעַן תִזְכָרוּ וַעֲשִיתֵם אֶת 'כָל מִצְוֹתֵי וגו – 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)

5 Tanchuma 15; Bereishis Rabbah 36:6

- 7 See Sanhedrin 46b
- 8 Sotah 17a and Menachos 43b

¹ See also Agra D'Kallah

² See Maharsha; Yad Ramah, Sanhedrin 64b

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

⁴ Bava Metzia 22b

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

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rainfall.¹⁰ Even today, with all of science's great advances, no man can bring or prevent rainfall. As the Gemara (Ta'anis 2a) says, the "key" of rain is in Hashem's hand alone. Certainly, rainfall is a great expression of Hashem's *hashgachah* over the world.

מִשְׁמַיִם הִבִּיט ה', רָאָה אֶת כָּל בְּנֵי הָאָדָם speaks clearly of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* over man: His knowledge of man's

Cheshvan is deeply linked to the concept of hashgachah pratis – and in this month in particular one can improve one's emunah in this area.

every thought and deed. *Hashgachah pratis* is a fundamental concept integral to our *emunah*. Every Yid must strengthen himself in this regard and live with full belief that every detail of our lives is orchestrated by Hashem.

The month of Cheshvan, which we have now entered, is particularly connected to the concept of *hashgachah pratis*.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is עילת העילות שילת העילות - *the Reason of reasons and the Cause of all causes*. Everything that takes place in this world has a cause, and every cause has a cause. The סיבת כל סיבת כל the Cause of all causes, is Hashem. It is He Who sets everything in motion.

13 Ta'anis 6b

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The word סיבה is mentioned once in *Tanach*. At the time of Rechavam's kingship, a dispute arose whether to lessen the tax burden or to leave it as it had been since Shlomo Hamelech's time. Rechavam followed the advice of the youth and did not decrease the taxes, but instead increased them. Because of this, the *aseres hashevatim* broke off *malchus beis David*, and appointed Yeravam as their king.

By all appearances, it was simply a game of politics: Rechavam chose to pass an unpopular law, and as a result, the people seceded from his kingdom. But the pasuk teaches that this was not the case: אָשָׁמע הַמֶּלֶך אֶל הָעָם, כִּי הְיָתָה סָבָּה וְלָא שְׁמַע הַמֶּלֶך אֶל הָעָם, כִּי הְיָתָה סָבָּר מַעם ה' לְמַען הָקִים אֶת דְּבָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר דְּבָר מעם ה' לְמַען הָקִים אֶת דְּבָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר דְּבָר *The king did not listen to the people, for* it was a design from Hashem, *in order to fulfill His word that Hashem had spoken through the hand of Achiyah the Shiloni to Yeravam the son of Nevat* (Melachim I 12:15).

It wasn't Rechavam's own poor choice that led to the kingdom's splintering; it was Hashem Who caused Rechavam to make that choice, in order to fulfill His word.

The *pesukim* continue to relate Yeravam's worry that when his new subjects would be *oleh regel* to the Beis Hamikdash, they would regret leaving *malchus beis David* and want to return to it. For this reason, דַּבָּעָם חָג בַּחָבָש אֲשֶׁר הַשְׁמִינִי בַּחְמָשָׁה עָשָׁר יוֹם לַחֹדָש וּגו' בַּחֹדָש אֲשֶׁר הַשְׁמִינִי בַּחְמָשָׁה עָשָר יוֹם לַחֹדָש וּגו' בַּחֹדָש אֲשֶׁר הַמָּשָׁמִינִי בַּחָמָשָׁה עָשָר יוֹם לַחֹדָש וּגו' בַּחֹדָש אֲשָׁר הַמָּשָׁמִינִי בַּחָמָשָׁה עָשָר יוֹם לַחֹדָש וּגו' בַחֹדָש אַשָּר הַמָּשָׁמִינִי בַּחָמָשָׁה עָשָר יוֹם לַחֹדָש וּגו' בַחֹדָש אַשָּר innovated a holiday in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month... in the month that he had fabricated with his imagination; he made a holiday for Bnei *Yisrael* (32-33). By introducing his new "*yom tov*," he was able to prevent his people from going to Yerushalayim for the true *regalim*.

Where was the fault in Yeravam's line of reasoning? He thought that his rise to the throne was a result of his own strength and wisdom. He therefore felt he needed to take steps to protect his crown. But in truth, it wasn't he who had succeeded in attaining the kingship; it was Hashem Who willed and caused him to be king. He was guaranteed the throne for a specific length of time, so long as he would act properly.¹¹ Nobody could take that away from him. But because Yeravam saw his kingship as a product not of *hashgachah* pratis but of his own wiles, he continued acting improperly to protect his hold on power, ultimately sinning and bringing his people to sin.

We see that the 'סְבָה מֵעָם ה', the hashgachah pratis that led to Yeravam's kingship, was connected especially to the eight month, Cheshvan, which was the ight month, Cheshvan, which was the יחד ש אַשֶׁר בְּדָא מִלְבו in which Yeravam instituted his holiday. (This concept is cited from tzaddikim.¹²) Cheshvan is deeply linked to the concept of hashgachah pratis – and in this month in particular one can improve one's emunah in this area.

For this reason, Chazal instituted that we begin davening for rain during Cheshvan (in Eretz Yisrael). Our appreciation for rain is such that we thank Hashem for הוטיכה cvery single drop.¹³ We strengthen our *emunah* that everything we have, to the minutest degree, is only through Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*.

(בנאות דשא – נח תשפ"ג)

¹⁰ See Ta'anis 2a

¹¹ Melachim I 11:29-39

¹² See Agra D'Pirka, no. 121 and other locations

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. Spare the Rod

The pasuk states (Yeshayah 54:9), אָרָ מָ מָ זאת (Yeshayah 54:9), די הי קי מָ זאת - 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), אוֹנְשָׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לָה וְאַנְשֵׁי סְדֹם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לָה - 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), אָרוּס עַל נִינְוָה וּגו' (*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 תשפ״א)

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⁽בנאות דשא – נח תשפ"א)

¹ Vol. 167b

² See MiPi Sefarim V'Sofrim

³ See Rashi 7:12