

THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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THE LOVE OF G-D FOR MAN CREATED IN HIS IMAGE

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

It is written, "And G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him" (Gen 1:27). On this the Mishnah comments, "Beloved is man, for he was created in the image [of G-d]" (Perkei Avoth 3:14). The image of G-d in man is what allows him to serve his Creator and have an understanding of Him, each man according to his intelligence and abilities, as the Rambam says in his Book of Knowledge (Yesodei Hatorah 2:2). It is through proper conduct that a man manifests this image of G-d that's within him.

This requires a person to work hard and strenuously on himself, for we have to correct our actions and acquire lofty values and traits in order to perceive this image of G-d, and to sense the reality of the Holy One, blessed be He. We should accustom ourselves to act properly in everything we do, especially in synagogues and houses of study, places that are particularly sanctified by G-d's Presence (Berachot 6a; Bamidbar Rabba 11:3; Shir Hashirim Rabba 2:21; Zohar III:4). As it is said, "G-d stands in the Divine assembly" (Ps 82:1), which means that in such an assembly, more than in any other place, we can sense the closeness of G-d and vividly feel His reverence. Not only that, but we will be able to sense His glory and His power, as it is said, "Know before Whom you stand" (Testament of Rabbi Eliezer Hagadol 18; Derech Eretz, end of chapter 3).

It is only when one knows and senses the image of G-d in man that one can understand before Whom one stands – in front of the King of kings, blessed be He. Alternatively, if one doesn't make this distinction, and if one doesn't clearly perceive the image of G-d that is in man, this image and likeness will vanish (see Gen 1:26), and thus one will no longer understand or comprehend that G-d's existence manifests itself everywhere.

If a man is to preserve the image of G-d that is within him, it follows that he must preserve

this image in his neighbor, for he too was created in the image of G-d. This is why everyone must respect his fellow man, as we are taught, "Let the honor of your fellow man be as dear to you as your own" (Perkei Avoth 2:13). It is specifically stated "your own" honor, meaning that in the same way in which you watch over the image of G-d that is within you, so must you watch over and protect the image of G-d that's in your fellow.

In wronging our fellow man, we commit a sin towards G-d. Our fellow is also created in the image of G-d, and so an insult directed at him is an insult directed at G-d. And yet, the one who sins in one of his obligations towards G-d is not like one who sins in one of his obligations towards man, for with regards to his fellow, when one sins against him, he also sins against G-d. This is why we are taught that repentance or suffering effects forgiveness for sins against G-d (Yoma 85-86a), but sins committed against one's fellow are not pardoned unless we have made peace with the person in question. It's only after having restored the image of G-d that is within one's fellow that the repentant one is accepted and obtains pardon for the sin that he committed against him. That's also why we should want the best for our fellow man, to the point of being able to once again perceive and sense the image of G-d that's within him, the image that we had attacked when sinning against him. And so things begin to come together and make sense.

Concerning the verse that states, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18), Rabbi Akiva said, "it is a fundamental principle of the Torah" (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4). For if someone were to attack the honor of his fellow, may G-d help us, it's as if he were to have denied the existence of He who gave the Torah. Which is to say that, by attacking the honor of his fellow, one denies G-d Himself. Loving one's fellow as oneself is a fundamental principle of the Torah, the everlasting delight of G-d.

With respect to Abraham Avinu, it is said that on that day that he obeyed the divine command and circumcised himself, he became perfect and

bore the Divine Presence. It's written that on the third day after his circumcision, "the L-RD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre" (Gen 18:1). On this verse, Rashi cites the comment of the Sages: "It was the third day after the circumcision, and G-d saw how Abraham regretted that he had no passer-by, and no one to welcome into his home. This was because G-d didn't want Abraham to be disturbed by visitors, so He created an intense heat" (Bava Metzia 86b). But this saddened Abraham, so he sent his servant Eliezer to search for guests (ibid.). G-d then had compassion on Abraham and sent him three angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, under the guise of Arabs (Bereshith Rabba 48:9).

Abraham was overjoyed to have the opportunity to welcome guests, and therefore he asked G-d, "If I have found favor in Your eyes, please pass not away from Your servant" (Gen 18:3), then "ran to meet them" (Gen 18:2). This shows us that Abraham left the Divine Presence to rush after his guests, to the point that the Sages learn from this that "receiving guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence" (Shabbat 127a).

This is a very surprising, and requires explanation:

1. The absence of guests caused greater pain for Abraham than that which he felt from being circumcised. And that was on the third day, when fatigue is most felt! (See Shabbat 134b and the commentary of Rabbeinu Nissim 31b).

2. Abraham found himself in G-d's Presence, Who had come to visit and heal him. Yet despite this, he regretted not having visitors. Does being in G-d's Presence thus have less meaning?

3. As soon as visitors arrived, Abraham left the Divine Presence and ran to meet them. Was it proper for him to act in such a way with respect to G-d? This is very surprising!

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THE LOVE OF G-D FOR MAN CREATED IN HIS IMAGE (continuation from page 1)

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

And what allows the Sages to affirm that receiving guests is more important than standing in the Divine Presence? What permits us to say that Abraham acted correctly when he withdrew himself from the Divine Presence?

4. Why did Abraham experience such discomfort from not having visitors, and why did he want so much to welcome them into his home?

5. What is remarkable about the fact that, after his circumcision (when he became perfected), he wanted so much that passers-by come visit him? Why just at that moment?

We will attempt to explain, with G-d's help, each of these points.

Abraham Avinu had a great love for all of G-d's creations. He never considered their exterior appearance but, on the contrary, he saw and felt only their internal demeanor – their essence – that which is hidden inside. As we saw earlier, everyone is created in the image of G-d, and that's what must be revealed. The role of Abraham in this world was to prove to men that their way of life was a failure. He was to convince them of the error of their ways so as to bring them to the knowledge of G-d and have them come under His Providence. This is what the Sages said concerning the verse that states, "And the souls that they made in Haran" (Gen 12:5), namely that "Abraham converted the men..." (Bereshith Rabba 39:21). This is also what Abraham told Eliezer his servant: "the L-RD, G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth" (Gen 24:3), and Rashi explains (citing the words of the Sages) that, "up to now He was but G-d of heaven, but since I've taught and accustomed the people to proclaim His Name, He is also G-d of the earth." Abraham made men realize that the image of G-d, which they once carried, had left them, and from that moment on (and thanks to his teaching) they found it once again.

Beginning from the moment that Abraham was circumcised, he became perfect and bore the Divine Presence. It was precisely at that time, in fact, that Abraham desired most of all to resemble G-d in everything. He desired to conduct himself in a way that reflected His image and His likeness, just as it's written, "Attach yourself to His ways and to His attributes: Just as He is merciful, you should be merciful; just as He is kind, you should be kind..." (Sotah 14a, amongst others). This is why Abraham, when he became G-d's partner, felt great anguish at not having visitors that he could be kind to, just as G-d acts kindly towards others. This is why G-d sent him three people – so that he could receive them. In seeing these visitors, Abraham left the Divine Presence and ran to meet them for two reasons:

1. Because he wished to emulate his Creator and perform an act of kindness.
2. Because he recognized in them the image of G-d, just as he saw it in all people.

From here on in, we can see how every one of the questions that we asked earlier can be answered. The anguish felt by Abraham because he didn't have visitors was greater than the pain of his circumcision because he wanted nothing to do but to bring men closer to, and resemble their Creator. This desire was so ardent that he forgot about the pain of his circumcision. All this occurred precisely when he was circumcised and had become perfect, in the sense that he would henceforth bear the Divine Presence. For it was at that moment that

he became a partner with his Creator, in His image and in His likeness. That's the reason why Abraham, even though he found himself in the presence of G-d, regretted not having visitors, for being in the presence of G-d is the goal of perfection only if we act in love to bring people back to G-d's protective care.

We now understand why Abraham withdrew himself from before G-d and ran after the visitors. It was because in them, also, Abraham recognized the Divine Presence and the image of G-d. Therefore he hastened towards the Divine Presence he found with them, and it's in that sense that welcoming guests is greater than welcoming the Divine Presence (since receiving guests means also receiving the Divine Presence). And so Abraham did not slight G-d's honor by withdrawing to run after his guests. Rather, he only expressed great kindness towards them and, just as the Creator is kind, so too was Abraham. He thus followed in His ways, and it's by actions such as these that the Divine Presence never leaves us.

The sacred obligation of all Jews, descendants of Abraham, is to conduct themselves as he did in order to reveal the Divine Presence in the world. It is to bring people back to G-d, and to restore in them the image of G-d that they lost because of their sins. It is not only for those who committed one mistake, but for those who committed great sins as well. It is to return them to G-d.

The Sages said, "Whoever causes the many to have merit, no sin shall come through him" (Perkei Avoth 5:18). For what reason is this? It is because the one who causes the many to have merit, as Abraham did, acts in accordance with the image and likeness of G-d. How could someone who acts like this therefore have something in his heart that brings dishonor to the Divine Presence and thus lead him to sin? The fear of G-d is what prevents him from sinning, and hence such a person can make the many acquire merit because he reveals the image of G-d in himself. He also can see it in others, and so he respects them, he brings them back to G-d, and he increases their faith. How does one recognize the image of G-d? One must put in great effort in order to sense it, and strive to have great success both with oneself and with others.

"Everyone must recognize the image of G-d in himself and his fellow, and this will prevent him from sinning. Peddling in gossip is a sin that cries out to Heaven" (Erchin 15b). As it is written, "They set their mouths against Heaven, and their tongues strut on earth" (Ps 73:9). "Gossip is a sin that is as serious as the three most heinous crimes: Idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder. And it is much more harmful" (Erchin 15b). But if we were sensitive to the image of G-d that is in our fellow, we would no longer utter words of gossip. There would be no more jealousy, hate, or competition among men. For finally, what can we possibly achieve from the Torah, from our own intelligence, or even from our own good deeds, if we lose the essential realization that, at all times and at every moment, "it is G-d that I fear" (Gen 42:18)? To show respect for the presence of G-d that is upon our fellow man, we must respect him and guard his honor close to heart.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADDIKIM

Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol

Our holy and venerated teacher, Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol, may his memory be blessed, was born in Agadir, Morocco on Tammuz 15, 5509 (July 1, 1749), the day of Rabbi Haim Ben Attar's Hilloula.

Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol was the son of the holy and venerated Rabbi Shlomo Pinto z"l, the descendant of Rabbi Yehoshiayu, who was known by the name of "the Rif of Ein Yaakov".

At a very young age, Rabbi Haim Pinto was taught Torah by his father, Rabbi Shlomo Pinto z"l. Unfortunately, Rabbi Shlomo Pinto passed away in 1761, leaving behind an orphan barley 12 years old. That same year, an earthquake entirely destroyed Agadir. The surviving Jews, being numerous, settled in Mogador (Essaouira), and among these was Rabbi Haim Pinto.

Rabbi Haim Pinto studied Torah along with Rabbi David Ben Hazan at the yeshiva of Rabbi Yaakov Bibas, the Dayan of the city. Rabbi Haim Pinto's reputation was so great that all Morocco resonated with miracles and wonders, and this from his most early years.

His teacher, Rabbi Yaakov Bibas, died in 1769, and the community of the city turned to Rabbi Haim Pinto to accept the heavy responsibility of city Dayan. Being but 20 years old, he finally accepted this responsibility in association with his friend, Rabbi David Ben Hazan. Rabbi Haim Pinto carried out his mandate as Head of the Rabbinic Court in an extremely firm manner, and when necessary he knew how to be very strict. Never did he allow someone to act incorrectly, and he exercised this function for more than 70 years. The greatest Chachamim of the generation esteemed him with fear and respect, and Jews and Muslims alike venerated him. His fame spread throughout Morocco, across the Middle East, and reached all the way to Europe. Eliyahu Hanavi revealed himself regularly to Rabbi Haim Pinto and studied with him, which explains why Rabbi Haim Pinto participated in all the Brith Milahs that took place in Mogador.

Among the many stories about Rabbi Haim Pinto z"l, the following is brought by Rav Moshe Wizgane, Head of the Rabbinic Court of Mogador: Rabbi Haim Pinto would routinely pray in the synagogue of a notable wealthy man in the city. Every Shabbat afternoon, before the Mincha prayer, he would give a course that would continue until such time as the wealthy man would say "baraka" ("that's enough"). One day he was giving a brilliant discourse that was amazing the audience, when all of a sudden the wealthy man said "baraka". Rabbi Haim continued. The wealth man repeated: "baraka", but still Rabbi Haim continued. So the wealthy man shouted in anger a third time, "BARAKA". Rabbi Haim stopped, but in the Mincha prayer that followed, he asked G-d to provide him with the funds necessary for the construction of his own synagogue, one in which he could do as he wished. Arriving the next day at his home was a man who had to leave for abroad. This man expressed his desire to safeguard a large amount of money with Rabbi Haim until he returned, for he was the only person that the man trusted. Rabbi Haim asked him if he could lend out the money until such time as the man returned, and he accepted. Thus Rabbi Haim asked some Jewish workers to begin construction on a new synagogue. Thanks to the sum of money that the man had safeguarded with him, Rabbi Haim was able to build a magnificent edifice. Rabbi Haim had understood that G-d had sent him this money through the intermediary of the Eliyahu Hanavi, since the lender never returned!

Rabbi Haim Pinto of blessed memory had four children: Rabbi Yehudah (known as Rabbi Hadane), Rabbi Yossef, Rabbi Yehoshiayu, and Rabbi Yaakov. All were great Tzaddikim, devoted to Torah and to Klal Israel.

Rabbi Haim Pinto of blessed memory left this world on Elul 26, 5605 (September 28, 1845) at the age of 96. On the day of his passing, he promised his disciples that those who would invoke his name on the day of his Hilloula would see their prayers answered.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

The orphan's tutor (A teaching of the Maggid of dubno on the Redemption)

We shall begin by examining the three following verses:

“Until when, O L-RD, will You endlessly forget me?” (Ps 13:2)

“Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death” (Ps 13:4)

“Why do You ignore us eternally, forsake us for so long?” (Lam 5:20)

These verses evoke a fundamental question: If it is a matter of forgetfulness, how can one ask for how long? In the final analysis, forgetfulness is something that is unlimited in time. Let us therefore try to express, through the use of an apt metaphor, this apparent contradiction.

In faraway Asia Minor, there once lived an old man who had a young daughter. He loved this little girl with all his heart, as much as he loved himself, and even more. Sensing his life drawing to a close, he called one of his best friends to his bedside and requested that he become the young girl's tutor, and to watch as much over her as over her inheritance. The old man began to elaborate: “Give nothing to my daughter from her inheritance until the day of her wedding – neither food nor clothing. True, she'll have to work extremely hard to earn a living, but that's my wish.”

The old man obviously wanted to educate his daughter and make her appreciate the value of money, rather than to waste it like spoiled girls from rich families. The tutor solemnly promised to his friend that he would carry out his will to the letter. Calmed by this, the old man passed away peacefully. As soon as the burial was over, the “tutor” waited not a minute more. He hurried to have the orphan hired as a maid with a rich family in the neighborhood, and then took all the possessions bequeathed to her by her father. The poor girl spent her days doing tiresome work: Cleaning everything from ceiling to floor, doing the laundry, ironing clothes, drawing water, carrying buckets, kindling wood on the stove, etc. Yet in exchange, her employers gave her but small pieces of black bread to eat.

The poor girl began to lose weight day by day, and her face became more and more pale. Seeing her in this state, her aunts and uncles went to the “tutor” to request that he take a little of her inheritance in order that the poor girl could at least eat properly. But, insensitive to their requests, the tutor replied, “You know very well that what I'm doing is not my idea. I'm satisfied doing exactly what the final wishes of her late father were.”

Days passed and winter arrived, harsher than the year before. But the young girl had to be content with a light robe and small shoes. Then, what eventually had to happen did: She fell ill and had to be confined to bed. The doctor realized the seriousness of her condition and made this known. Once again, the girl's family members rushed to the “tutor”, begging him to give them a little money to buy the necessary medicine. But the man answered them, “I have no right to take the slightest amount from the inheritance before the day of her wedding.”

But this time the girl's family members didn't let themselves be intimidated by this, and they began to scream, “It's very good

to pretend that you're safeguarding her money until she gets married, but if we don't use some money now for the doctor and the medication, who will you accompany to the chuppah, a corpse? And then who will you be keeping the inheritance money for?”

The moral of this story: All the good reserved for the Jewish People are promised to them for the future. The Holy One also made us swear not to precipitate things, for as long as the exile continues, the promised goods will continue to grow and multiply, just like fruits on a tree. The longer that they remain attached to their branches, the better they become, and the softer and juicier they grow. But we ourselves will not cease to cry out for G-d's help.

Our troubles are too numerous in this bitter exile. If it continues like this, we risk (G-d forbid) disappearing entirely. Until when will You endlessly forget us? Until when will you forsake us?

In other words, if You abandon us too long, we risk (G-d forbid) sinking eternally into forsakenness. This is why that we ask the Holy One to consider the seriousness of our condition, for we are at the precipice of death: “Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.”

Eishet Chayil

Laws of netilat yadayim (ritual washing of hands)

Netilat Yadayim of the Morning

- Women should be careful to see that their children perform Netilat Yadayim before touching any food. Nevertheless, it is permitted to dress before washing the hands.

- Netilat Yadayim is performed in the following manner:

One takes the vessel in the right hand and passes it to the left hand. The left hand then pours water onto the right hand once. The vessel is then taken by the right hand, which pours water onto the left hand once.

The above operation is then repeated a second and third time. Before wiping the hands, we recite the following blessing: Baruch ata A-do-nai asher kideshanu bemitsvotav vetsivanu al netilat yadayim.

- This blessing should be done in a clean area.

- When having to go to the bathroom to help a child, one is obligated to perform netilat yadayim without saying the blessing.

- Women are obligated to recite the asher yatzar blessing, which is said after having wiped the hands. If we forget to say it, we can still recite it within 72 minutes. Passed this time, we are not permitted to say it.