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IN MEMORY OF MENDEL BEN MENDEL A"H

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# פרשת כי תצא

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## In His Image

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## Part I. Greatness of Humanity

### Hanging the Wicked

*And if a man should commit a sin whose judgement is death, he shall be put to death, and afterward you should hang him on a post (Ki Seitzei 21:22). The Torah tells us that certain criminals are punished by a form of death penalty called skilah, stoning. And it says (Sanhedrin 45b) that kol haniskalin nitlin – all those who get skilah must be hanged.*

There's no such thing as death by hanging according to the Torah, but those who are put to death by stoning are subsequently hung up on a post. That's because unlike the demoralized society of today where misplaced compassion rules the street, and therefore criminals rule the street, Hashem's Torah raises on high the principle of punishing criminals. And therefore, וְתָלִיתָ אֹתוֹ עַל עֵץ – we raise aloft the ideal of retribution by hanging the body of the condemned man on a post for everyone to see. וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְאוּ – *And all of Yisroel should hear and*

they should be afraid (ibid.). The sinner, even in death, is publicly scorned in order to demonstrate the judgement taken against anyone who might brazenly act against the will of Hashem.

### **The Sudden U-Turn**

And yet, in the following possuk, we find something very different. **לֹא תֵלֵין בְּבֵיתוֹ עַל הָעֵץ** – Do not leave his body hanging there overnight (ibid.). A person hanging in public?! Oh no! “Don’t leave him hanging for too long,” says the *possuk*. And because of that command, the *halacha* is that we fulfill the *mitzvah* “and you should hang him on a piece of wood,” and then *matirin oso miyad*, we take him down right away to fulfill the words “do not leave him hanging” (Sanhedrin 46b).

Now, such a turnabout, such a sudden change in direction, has to be understood. And so, the *possuk* gives us the reason: **כִּי קִלְלַת אֱלֹהִים תְּלֹוי** – It’s a disgrace for Elokim when a man remains hanging. To leave a man hanging from a tree is a disgrace for Hashem.

Now, we’re talking here about a man who deserves the death sentence – if a Jewish *beis din* sentenced somebody to death it means that it was beyond any shadow of a doubt that he was guilty. He certainly deserved it. And therefore, why don’t we leave him hanging there? That’s the purpose of this *mitzvah* after all – we want everyone to see the results of rebelling against the Torah! Isn’t it true that hanging the sinner for everyone to see reinforces the moral fiber of society?

### **Don’t Make Light**

Yes; of course it does! Absolutely! And yet, Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, “Take him down anyhow. Take him down right away because it’s disgracing Me when a man remains hanging.” It’s a **קִלְלַת אֱלֹהִים**, it’s making light of Hashem. *Klalah* means to make light of, like the word *kal*; it means that Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself is dishonored when this man is disgraced.

Why is that so? How is the hanging man a disgrace for Hashem? Because he is made in the image of Hashem, as it says (Bereishis 9:6) ‘In the image of G-d He made man.’ (Rashi; Ki Setzei ibid.) When that dead man is hanging there on the gallows, it’s the image of Hashem that is hanging.

### **The Black Sheep of the Family**

Our sages (Sanhedrin 46b) illustrate it like this: “It once happened that twin brothers – identical twins – lived in the same city. Many years

passed and one of them eventually became king. He was a wise person, well-liked too, and he made his way up among the aristocracy of the city until finally he was appointed king. Meanwhile, his twin brother wasn't as successful – he chose a different profession; he became a *ganav*, a bandit who ambushed travelers on the backroads outside of the city.

Finally this bandit was caught and condemned to death. That's how it was among the gentiles in the good old days – a highway bandit was executed. If the more liberal people were in charge he would get away with his hand being cut off; otherwise, he was crucified – that's the way the Romans liked to do it in the ancient days. And they would leave him hanging there as a warning to others: "No bandits allowed here!" And it worked. A would be *ganav* thought once and twice and three times before choosing such a profession.

So this bandit, the king's identical twin, is hanging on the gallows in the city square and now there's murmuring among the city residents. And it rises to a crescendo: 'What's going on here?! The King is hanging! Our King is hanging from the gallows!' And so, *tzivah hamelech v'horiduhu* – the King gives an order: 'Take him down immediately.' It's a *bizayon* for the king because they have the same face. The King says, "Take him down because when people look at it they'll say the king is hanging and that's a disgrace for me."

### **He Looks Like Me!**

And that's why, says the *Gemara*, we are commanded to take down the hanging man. It's because **בְּצִלְמֵ אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם**, man was made in the image of his Creator and it's a *bizayon* for Hakodosh Boruch Hu that a portrait of Himself should be hanging in disgrace. Hashem says "Take him down because he looks like Me."

What this tells us is that the words describing the creation of Man in the beginning of the Torah – "Adam is created in the image of Hashem" – are not just poetry. Oh no! That proclamation that Hakodosh Boruch Hu made at the very outset of Creation is very real – real enough that we take down the sinner from the gallows because he is carrying upon himself the *tzelem*, the portrait of his Creator. And it's so important that even when we hang a criminal to teach society the results of rebelling against Hashem, we can't leave him there. Whatever benefit might be gained by keeping this executed sinner hanging, this lesson of *tzelem Elokim* on the face of every man is even more important.

It's the most important! The *yesod ha'yesodos* of Torah, one of the very first things mentioned in the Torah, is to know that a man is *tzelem Elokim*. If it's mentioned at the beginning of Creation then it underlies everything else in the Torah and therefore it has to be studied. And if we just read these words superficially and then we go on from there to the rest of the Torah then although we might build a Torah edifice, we have to know that we are neglecting the foundation of edifice. One of the foundations of the Torah is understanding that when you look at a face you're looking at an image of Hashem.

### **Shocking Words!**

Now, these are the most startling words you could hear and to people who never heard this it seems extreme. That the *Toras Hashem* which teaches that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is far superior to any physical attributes should insist on us believing that **בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם**, *that man's face is a reflection of the divine?!* It sounds ridiculous to the untrained ear! And therefore when they hear this they attempt to explain it away by abstractions.

And it certainly means more than the plain meaning. "The image of Hashem" in the face of man? Certainly it's only a figure of speech. Nobody can know what it means; it's impossible to fathom such a thing. And it's against the *emunah*. Anybody who thinks that Hakodosh Boruch Hu actually has eyes is a *min* according to the Rambam; he loses his portion in the World to Come because he's not believing in Hashem – it's the wrong Hashem. Of course, Hashem doesn't have nostrils! He doesn't have ears and lips and cheeks! Absolutely not! And yet, "Never mind that," says Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "I'm telling you that you were made in My image, and although it's merely a figure of speech, the simple meaning also has a place."

### **The Forty Year Shiur**

And so, we have to train ourselves with a lifetime of labor until you rise to the level of thinking along with the beginning of the *chumash!* *Tzelem Elokim* is a big subject, a very big subject that deserves many hours of study. And it was done already! In Europe, the Alter of Slabodka, *zichrono livracha*, spoke forty years on the subject of *tzelem Elokim!* Forty years!

I once said to an old Slabodker *talmid* that a man told me that he had been in Slabodka and that he had heard so much about it that it was coming out of his ears. So this Slabodker *talmid* told me that this man

was mistaken – he didn't hear enough! The more you hear, the more you understand that you didn't hear enough.

### **Endless Greatness**

It was told that when the Alter was leaving Slabodka to settle in Eretz Yisroel, he was accompanied by his students until the Lithuanian border. The Alter was sitting in the train talking to them through the window as they stood at the station and as the train began to slowly pull away they walked on the walkway alongside the train in order to be with him for those last few moments. And so a Lithuanian policeman came and waved them away from the moving train. And these are the last words that they heard from their rebbe. The rebbe said – I'll say it in yiddish: "Mir villen em grois machen uber er luzt unz nisht." Which means, "We are trying to make him great but he doesn't permit us."

It was said in jest but it meant like this. For forty years the Alter was teaching the greatness of Mankind. And it is such a fundamental Torah principle that he wanted to continue teaching it until his last moments with his *talmidim*. "Don't ever forget the foundation," he warned them. "The Torah is telling us how to regard a human face! Like the *tzelem Elokim!*"

## *Part II. Greatness of the Soul*

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### **Washing the Statue**

The *gemara* (Shabbos 50b) says, רוחץ אדם פניו לכבוד קונו – A man should wash his face in honor of his Creator, and Rashi there explains what that means. He says like this: When Hashem told us בְּצַלְמֵם אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם, that He created man in His image, He wanted us to remember that always; and so it's the duty of those who possess the image of Hashem to maintain the beauty of the image by washing it.

It's like the king who gives a beautifully carved sculpture of himself as a gift to one of his subjects. Now, let's say two weeks later the king comes to visit this man in his home and he sees that there's dust on the statue; the king sees cobwebs hanging from the forehead of the bust. So he sees that his friend doesn't think much of him. But if the friend washes the king's statue every day and keeps it nice and clean, the king knows that his subject appreciates the gift; it shows that he is aware of its value.

And that's why we're *mechuyav* to wash our faces every day. Not because we want people to look at us, to admire us; we wash our faces because it's the *tzelem Elokim* we're washing. Every morning you wash your face because of the infinite grandeur of Hakodosh Boruch Hu that is being projected onto your face.

### **A Penny for Your Face**

It's a pity that today the world is taught to look at a person and to see just a heap of chemicals. That's what they'll tell you in the universities – all you are is a certain amount of nitrogen and calcium mixed with carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and some other elements. If you would take all these elements and separate them and try to sell them to a drugstore man, he might give you five cents or ten cents for it. Is that what a person is?

Oh no! There's a mysterious beauty in the human face; it's the most interesting object in the universe. There's nothing as appealing, nothing as noble and interesting as a human face. In the entire universe, there's nothing that compares to it. If you'd travel, let's say, to the far off countries; if you'll traverse the vast wilderness and climb the highest mountains, you'll never see anything in the universe as interesting as a human face. The nobility of the human countenance is unequaled.

I see the grandeur in your face. I don't see just a face; I see your forehead, your beautiful nose and your eyes. Your face is engaging; it's entrancing and spellbinding! I see those lips, the beautiful lips that can speak words! I see expressive eyes looking at me. You look at a person's eyes and they express intelligence; they express a depth of thoughtful nobility and emotions, a depth that seems to be bottomless. Even the expression in your cheeks. The way the cheeks move; the expression of emotions, the smile or sadness – there's nothing so noble in the world. *Tzelem Elokim!* You're an image of Hashem!

### **The Secret of the Face**

Now, we have to stop here for a moment and ask ourselves: Why is the human face entitled to such a grandeur and beautiful nobility that it should be considered a *tzelem Elokim*, a reflection of Hashem Himself? What is it that makes the face of man so noble and entrancing?

And the answer is that it's the *neschama*, the soul, that is projecting from the face of Man. And what is the source of the soul? What is the secret of the soul? It's a *chelek Eloka mimaal*. It's something of Hashem! **וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים** – *Hakodosh Boruch Hu blew into man's nostrils the*

*breath of life*. Ooh wah, is that a *possuk* to study! It's a pity that we began reading the *chumash* when we were children and we've accustomed ourselves to these words as a child thinks; we never took the trouble to review them. These words contain a fundamental teaching of immense importance.

### **The Breath of Life**

*Nishmas chayim*, the breath of life, is not mentioned in connection with any of the other living creatures. It says that Hashem formed the other creatures. He didn't breathe anything into them and they live anyhow. So we also can live without the breath of Hashem; for what purpose did Hakodosh Boruch Hu breathe into Man?

It's because when you blow, you blow from yourself. And, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu blew into man, He blew from Himself. It means that *in man there is something of the divine!* That's what it means when it says, "Man is made in the image of Hashem."

And we'll have to ponder these words because they have been misunderstood. They've been taken to mean that there is some faint resemblance, some complementary comparison of man to his Creator. Oh no! The *chumash* is not talking poetry. It's *k'pshuto!* It's talking straightforwardly and it states as clearly as could be that **בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם** – *He made man in His image!* It's far beyond whatever we would ever have said on our own – it actually means that there is something of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in men.

### **The Infinite Man**

Now, what that means certainly must be explained because Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't have any form; absolutely not. But He certainly does have greatness and glory. And His greatness and glory are infinite. He has wisdom and His wisdom is infinite. He has perfection of every kind and His perfection is infinite. And because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *bli gvul u'bli tachlis*, because He is infinitely great, so what He put into Mankind is also infinite.

It doesn't mean that you're already perfect but it means that you possess within your soul a capability for endless perfection. **בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם** means that Man has within him potential for infinite nobility, infinite glory, infinite wisdom, and infinite perfection.

Of course, nobody will live long enough to bring forth all of the qualities that are concealed within his *neshama*. But as long as you live

you continue to have that opportunity to draw forth that reflection of Hashem's infinite perfection. And it's such a wondrous reflection that if you could live forever you would be capable of drawing forth endless and infinite greatness.

### ***It's All In The Shadow***

And all of that greatness, all of that potential perfection, is included in the word *tzelem*; all of these infinite attributes are reflected in the face of man. *Tzelem* comes from the word *tzel*; it means a shadow. A shadow is not the original thing but it reflects the original. Just like the original moves, the shadow also moves; it has the outlines of the original.

It's like a picture that plays on the screen from a movie projector; you see forms moving but actually it's nothing but color and outline – if you put your hand on the screen there's nothing there. And the face of *Adam* is a form of a *tzeil*, a shadow of the *Shechina*; it is something that resembles Hakodosh Boruch Hu because it is a reflection being projected from the *neshama*, which itself is reflecting the *kedusha* of the *Shechina*.

### ***Making War on Mankind***

And because this principle is so important, because it's the foundation of the Torah, that's why there has been raised against it a tremendous opposition; and in the last hundred years this opposition has become greater than ever before. That's the theory of evolution; evolution is an open attack on the principle of *gadlus ha'adam*; it's an open war against this Torah principle of *tzelem Elokim*. The government is giving billions of dollars to help the evolutionists fight their war. Billions of dollars! NASA is trying to fly ships to all the planets in order to discover some other creatures who developed by accident in other ways.

All over the world, it's evolution, *shmevolution*, wherever you turn. If you would consider how much literature is devoted to the subject of belittling man, if you would see the libraries and the institutions, the funding by governments, how many different branches of research have been established in the subject, you'll see that there's nothing in the world today that is getting as much attention as the attack on the greatness of Mankind.

### ***A Goy Is Not A Shaiget***

Not only is the greatness of Mankind disregarded – on the contrary, it's disparaged and played down. The gentile world doesn't want to hear

what the Torah says – they're busy wanting to believe that you're just a highly developed amoeba; fish that came out of the water and grew legs. I may surprise you now but *Adam* who was created with *tzelem Elokim* doesn't mean only Jews. *Adam* means all of Mankind. In Slabodka, they never said on a *goy* the word *shaigetz*. *Shaigetz* comes from the words *sheketz* – abomination. They never said *shaigetz* on a *goy*. Never! Never! Six years I was there; I listened. Not once! How can you say *shaigetz* on a human face?! How can you say *shaigetz* on a *tzelem Elokim*?

And yet, the world won't accept their own greatness. Man is considered just an animal; a creature of base traits and desires. All of the animalistic desires are glorified in the newspapers. The television, movies and books are filled with *leitzanus*; they're busy ridiculing human traits, making fun of human weakness. And that means they're busy ignoring the glory that resides in Mankind; they're doing everything they possibly can to take the portrait of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and reduce themselves to animals. It's a pity that the world has taken their image of *Elokim*, the gift of greatness, and dipped that face in mud. They took a beautiful image and smeared it with dirt.

### **The Real Criteria**

The entire world today thinks like children who have no training, no ability to see beyond superficialities and therefore they're focused on the animal functions of man. A colored boy is sitting on a milk crate on a street corner and he's thinking whether his teacher in school is a good teacher or not. So he says, "When the teacher leans over to me and shows me the place he has bad breath." That's their measure of a fellow human being!

Suppose this colored boy would be transported to an era of two hundred years ago before people used soap; so there was a human weakness that people didn't always smell good. You just can't help it without soap. People didn't have baths in their homes; they didn't have hot water. Bathing was a difficult thing to achieve. A hot bath? Even Queen Elizabeth took only one hot bath a year. It was a big event! And so, if you would be transported back two hundred years and you never learned about *tzelem Elokim*, you would disdain all the great people who live then. Great heroes, great geniuses and scientists, would be nothing because just like a dog, you would take one sniff and reject them. Those are the standards of the dog.

## Looking Up To Mankind

And that means the *umos ha'olam* are exchanging their glory, their *tzelem Elokim*, for an animal mentality. And that's why they douse themselves with perfume all the time. Instead of washing themselves with soap the substitute is perfume because that's their criterion of the human personality – he smells good.

But for people who understand man, all these things are meaningless. When we study Torah, when we study the words *b'tzelem Elokim asa es ha'Adam* and begin to realize the greatness of men, how intrinsically great a man is, then we begin to disregard the silly criteria of the multitude of today and we begin to look up to Mankind; we see the glory in man and we begin to appreciate the *gadlus ha'Adam*. Not just because of democracy; not because we're all equal and every man and woman should have the same opportunities. No, nothing to do with that. It's because of Torah; the Torah says that the importance of man is **בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֱת הָאָדָם**, man was made in the image of Hashem. And it's an endless greatness; you'll never get through understanding how great it is because it's endless – everyone has an infinite fountain of wisdom and nobility within them.

## Part III. Life with Greatness

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### Judge By The Cover

Now, in what way did Hakodosh Boruch Hu reveal the greatness of man in this world? The answer is **בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֱת הָאָדָם**; by means of the reflection of His image that He places on Man's face. The face is a screen upon which the *neshama* projects itself; the soul throws its own image on the face in order to bestir you to appreciate the greatness that Mankind possesses within.

It's like when you buy a diamond for your wife; even though it might be the most expensive diamond, you won't bring it home in a brown paper bag. If you bring it to her in a paper bag so she'll say, "What's inside?" and she'll look inside. Of course you'll tell her, "You should know, this cost me a lot of money," but she won't appreciate it properly. So what do you do? You tell the jeweler, "Make sure that you put the diamond ring into an expensive leather box; and it should have a blue plush background with a satin lining in the cover." Oh yes! Now she'll realize that the diamond really is something.

It's a pity that we have lost the ability to appreciate the grandeur of men; it's because we have ignored the great principle of *tzelem Elokim*. We ignore the exquisite leather box and the blue plush – that's the face of Mankind – intended to accentuate the diamond that our *neshama* is. A human face, with its intelligence, its emotions, its responsiveness, its yearning and all the great emotions that a human face expresses, is supposed to be for us a reminder – the *tzelem Elokim* is expected to awaken in us the appreciation of the infinite greatness that the Creator breathed into Man.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

Now, I understand that all of this seems exaggerated. You think I'm blowing it up, making a whole story out of nothing. But the truth is that we only think that way because we're very far away from the *ruach haTorah*; we're very removed from the Torah. Hashem tells us that He made us – that's you and you and you – *b'tzelem Elokim*, and He insists we should get that into our heads.

Let's practice it right now. Look at each other's faces. Look around – not at me – look at your fellowman's face. There are beautiful faces all around you. Now tell yourself, "That face is an image of Hashem." You have to say it constantly, again and again, until it sinks into your mind that it's a factual statement. And *habo litaher misayin lo*; Hakodosh Boruch Hu will give you assistance, and over time, with practice, you'll gain a certain appreciation of the image of Hashem that is being projected in your fellow man's face.

### **Your G-dly Relatives**

Of course, one or two times is not enough. There's a lot of work to be done and don't think you can shirk it. After all, it's Torah. You have to begin branching out. Let's say, you're marrying into a family. You never saw your *mechutanim*'s family before. They come with a whole host of brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law and cousins-in-law; a whole army of relatives that you're seeing for the first time. So you have to get busy. Instead of thinking foolish thoughts – this one has a nose that's too long, and that one has round eyes or big lips or red cheeks – instead of wasting your time with foolishness, you get busy working on appreciating the *tzelem Elokim* that Hashem gifted to Mankind.

So you're standing at the wedding looking at them and you're thinking, "*Tzelem Elokim, tzelem Elokim, tzelem Elokim.*" They come over to you to say *mazel tov* and you're smiling and saying *mazel tov* to them,

but the whole time you're thinking about the *tzelem Elokim* that you're looking at; you're looking the greatness of the *neshama*, the unlimited potential for *shleimus* that Hashem put into Man. Every face that you look at, you don't think that you're looking only at Mr. Rubin or Chaim or Mr. Greenberg or Dovid. There's so much more; you're seeing infinite opportunity for greatness.

### **Spread the Wealth**

Of course once we get that feeling, it will spread to others too. It might spread to your parents and to brothers and sisters after a while. It might spread to your neighbors. It's a big project, but once you start you're on your way. And the truth is, no matter how much you'll think about your fellow man's face, you should know you're not thinking enough. Don't say, "I'm maybe overdoing it." You're underdoing it!

And therefore, we have to train ourselves to appreciate the grandeur of the face of Man. You should think and think and practice that for years until that thought actually enters your mind that this face is *tzelem Elokim*. That's the purpose of the face; to bestir us by means of the externalities to appreciate what he is internally. So when you see the *tzelem Elokim* on a person's face you're expected to use that as a lever to stir yourself to an appreciation of the greatness that lies within that person's mind and soul; to see the *gadlus ha'Adam*, the greatness of man.

### **The Most Important Face**

Now, once you get into the habit of appreciating the *tzelem Elokim* in others, not only are you bestirred to the awareness of other people's potential greatness, but you'll recognize the *tzelem Elokim* on your *own* face. And that's the most important awareness of all because it awakens within you a response. You feel that there really is something special there; that there's actually a greatness bubbling up from within you. You feel closer to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and more aware of the great responsibility that you have while you are still alive, while the *tzelem Elokim* still reflects from your face. You're not going to get another chance! This lifetime is your opportunity for greatness.

And in order that you should not lose sight of this great principle – even for one day – Hakodosh Boruch Hu did something exceptional. Pay attention to this. Hakodosh Boruch Hu created a multitude of different kinds of creatures in the world and they have no necessity of washing their faces. Only Mankind must wash their faces. Animals might

clean their faces but it's nothing like the human face which becomes disfigured when it is not washed.

### ***Sensitive Skin of Mankind***

Hakodosh Boruch Hu intentionally gave Mankind a more sensitive face, a more special face, in order that we should have the function of washing our faces. Had we had faces of fur or of leathery skin which would not need any washing we would miss out on this function and we would lose the benefit of the lessons we're expected to learn from this function.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu made man in such a fashion that he must wash his face frequently; He gave us His portrait of Him and He says, "Take care of it. See to it that remains clean." It means that He wants you to be reminded always of your greatness. "Remember the portrait you're carrying," says Hashem to us. "And don't ever lose sight of your almost infinite potential for perfection that it represents."

And therefore every day it's worthwhile to keep that in mind. It's a glorious opportunity in *emunah*. You cannot think any *pesukim* when you walk into the bathroom but just before you walk in think, "I'm going now to wash the portrait of the king." That's what the Gemara says. It changes the entire conduct of your life. "Every day I'm polishing the statue of the King."

### ***The Original Mr. Clean***

In *Vayikra Rabba* (34:3), Chazal tell us about an ancient practice in the days of royalty. In order that the image of the king should be honored by the public, statues of the king would be erected in the theaters and the stadiums where people assembled. And there was always a certain man who was appointed for the function of keeping these statues clean. It was his job to take care of these statues; to always brush off the dust and to wash them down from time to time.

*V'hein ma'alim lo mezonos* — and the royal house gave him his livelihood because of that. It means that a *parnasah*, a respectable living, was provided to him just because he took care of the king's statue. And not only that but *hu misgadel im gedolei malchus* — he was honored among the noble people of the government. Whenever the nobility came together, this man who had the privilege to attend to the king's statue would be included among them. That's how it was among the Romans; they honored the man who brought honor to the king's statue. If he's

busy every day with the honor of the image of the king, then he's already important.

### ***Guardians of The Statue***

Now, *Chazal* aren't merely telling us stories. It's a *mashal* for us, so that we should understand the importance of taking care of the *tzelem Elokim* that Hashem gave us; it's not just going through the motions – it means that you recognize the greatness, the infinite potential, that you have within you. And it's such an important function that just for that you deserve to be recognized among the aristocracy of the world. The king appreciates those who do that and He's *maaleh mezonos* for that; you deserve to get your livelihood because of that. Of course you have to try to make a living on your own but your success in life depends on understanding this principle that you're honoring Hashem when you appreciate your face and what it represents.

Your face is a mirror of Hashem! It's a *tzelem*, a reflection of the Glory of the Creator! That's why all our lives we should try to make our features look as best as possible. Your face should always be wearing an expression of nobility because there's nothing more noble in the universe. Of course, even the most beautiful image can be distorted. In America everyone is always laughing, grinning, making silly faces – sometimes at weddings the photographer makes all kinds of tricks to cause you to laugh and people sit there with a silly smile. If a person utilizes foolish emotions to twist his features into unnecessary grins or malicious frowns, his face assumes an appearance which is a disgrace for the *tzelem Elokim*.

### ***Noble Faces For Noble People***

But when you're aware of the *tzelem Elokim*, such a thing can't be. A man with the awareness of his *tzelem Elokim* has a certain sweet nobility on his face; a sweet gravity – not serious, not sad but a simple nobility that expresses most fully that ideal of *tzelem Elokim*.

That's how important is the function of appreciating that when Hakodosh Boruch Hu breathed the *neshama* into man, He breathed something of Himself. Because it means the *neshama* is infinite. The greatness of man is beyond our ability to measure! And that's one of the foundations of Torah – that man is so great that we can never fathom the depths of his importance! No matter how much we'll discuss it, we'll never reach the bottom of the depths of the greatness of Mankind.

## Carrying The Portrait

And it's only when one understands the *gadlus ha'Adam* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu taught us when He created Man, it's only when you internalize the words of the *possuk*, "In the image of Elokim, Hashem created Man," that you have the key to understanding the words in our *parsha* that we began with tonight: **כִּי קָלַלְתָּ אֱלֹקִים תְּלֹוִי** – *the hanging man is a disgrace for Elokim*.

That poor fellow, the sinner who was hung for public view in order to encourage loyalty to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, must nevertheless be taken down as soon as possible because it's a disgrace that a man who had so much potential for greatness, so much nobility and perfection that Hakodosh Boruch Hu implanted within him, should have wasted the great opportunity that life is.

It's only when Man walks on the face of this earth carrying the portrait of the king and not realizing what he's displaying, only then can he reach such degradation. If a man carries a portrait of the king and he thinks that he's just carrying a bag of apples, he's a failure! He has to know the value of what he's carrying and how that makes him so great in the world. Because as long as the heart beats within man, as long as he still breathes, the *tzelem Elokim* – the greatness of his *neshama* – shines from his noble face reminding himself and others of the infinite greatness that he should be always trying to draw forth from his soul.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**The Rav said tonight that we should get busy before Rosh Hashanah remembering all the good that Hashem has given us since last Rosh Hashanah. But don't we have to spend the time we have left thinking about our sins and our behavior over the past year and making resolutions for improving this coming year?**

A:

You'll recall that I said the words, "as part of our work." Really, there's so much work to be done that we don't have time in the ensuing period, until tomorrow at sunset, to do what has to be done. But remembering all the good that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this past year, and thanking Him for it, is most surely a very important part of our preparation.

So instead of worrying about fitting it all in, I'll tell you what to do. You make sure to think for five minutes about the past year; about all the good that Hashem has given you since exactly one year ago. Do that and you'll be a great man. And then another five minutes spend thinking about resolutions for the coming year. And then you'll be an even greater person. Those ten minutes will be a great accomplishment.

If after sitting here for an hour and a half, you'll go out and think for five minutes, you should know that you're an exception. You're a *dagul mei'rivavah* – you're one out of ten thousand. There's nobody like you.

Who thinks for five whole minutes about gratitude to Hashem for the past year?! And who thinks for five minutes about making resolutions for improving himself in the coming year?! People talk about it but that's all. That's why I said in the beginning of our talk that if you do this on a small scale, then you shoot up and your head is way above everybody else.

TAPE #138 (September 1976)

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