

Elul 2022

Week 4 Primary Source Text

Tomer Devorah ch. 1

הד' - לשארית נחלתו - הנה הקדוש ברוך הוא מתנהג עם ישראל בדרך זה לומר מה אעשה לישראל והם קרובי שאר בשר יש לי עמם שהם בת זוג להקדוש ברוך הוא וקורא לה בתי, אחותי, אמי. כדפראשו ז"ל וכתוב ישראל עם קרובו ממש קרבה יש לו עמם ובניו הם. והינו לשארית נחלתו לשון "שאר בשר" וסוף סוף הם נחלתו. ומה אמר, אם אענישם הרי הכאב עלי כדכתיב (ישעיה סג, ט) בכל צרתם לו צר.

כך האדם עם חברו כל ישראל הם שאר בשר אלו עם אלו מפני שהנשמות כלולות יחד יש בזה חלק זה ובזה חלק זה, ולכך אינו דומה מרבים העושים את המצות וכ"ז מפני כללותם.

ולכך ראוי לאדם להיותו חפץ בטובתו של חברו ועינו טובה על טובת חברו וכבודו יהיה חביב עליו כשלו שהרי הוא הוא ממש, ומטעם זה נצטוונו (ויקרא, יט) ואהבת לרעך כמוך וראוי שיירצה בכשרות חברו ולא ידבר בגנותו כלל ולא ירצה בו כדרך שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא רוצה בגנותנו ולא בצערנו מטעם הקרבה, אף הוא לא ירצה בגנות חברו ולא בצערו ולא בקלקולו וירע לו ממנו כאלו הוא ממש היה שרוי באותו צער או באותו טובה.

The fourth - "To the remnant of God's inheritance" - behold, the Holy Blessed One acts with Israel in such a way, as to say, "What can I do with Israel, [as] they are My relatives – a flesh relation I have with them." As they are the partner to the Holy Blessed One; and God calls them (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 3:11:2), "My daughter" and "My sister," "My Mother" - as the Sages, may their memory be blessed, explained. And it is written (Psalms 148:14), "Israel, God's close (*kerovo*, i.e., relative) nation" - God has actual closeness (*kurvah*) with them, and they are God's children. And that is [the meaning of] the remnant of (*she'erit*) God's inheritance" - it is an expression of relation (*she'er*) of flesh; and in the end, they are God's (literal) inheritance. "And what shall I (God) say? If I punish them, behold the pain is upon Me; as it is written (Isaiah 63:9), 'In all their distress, the distress (*tsar*) was to God.'"

So is it [regarding] a person with their friend: All Israel are relations of flesh, these with those. Since all of their souls are bound together, this one has a share in that and that one has a share in this. And hence it is not similar when the many do the commandments [to when they are only done by individuals]. And all of this is because of their being bound together.

And hence it is fitting that a person be desiring of the good of one's friend and one's eye be good towards the good of one's fellow, and that one's honor should be as beloved to them as one's [own honor] - as the other person is literally yourself. And from this reason we are commanded (Leviticus 19:18), "you shall love your neighbor

Elul 5782

Tzelem Elokim - The Likeness of God

as yourself." And it is fitting that one desire the propriety of one's fellow and not speak about the others disgrace at all. And one [should] not want it, in the way that the Holy Blessed One does not want our disgrace nor our pain - from the reason of relation. So too [should] a person not want the disgrace of their fellow nor their pain, nor their corruption. And the others pain should be bad for you, as if you are actually experiencing that pain, or that good [that the other experiences].

Study Questions:

1. The guidance RaMaK gives us that we are meant to follow in our own lives is modeled on the relationship between God and Israel, which he characterizes in terms of actual kinship, as a close flesh relationship. What does this mean to you?
2. The assumption here is that when we are family, we are expected to behave differently from how we do with other people. Do you agree? According to RaMaK, what defines family? What defines family for you?
3. RaMaK applies the category of "family" and "flesh relations" to all of Israel, but not beyond. In what way might you come to see all Jews as your family in some way or to some degree?
4. RaMaK makes a bold statement about human relations: When we are in relationship with another person, a part of that other person actually abides within us, as does a part of us reside in them. How do you understand that assertion? Can you give examples from your own experience that bear out this level of connectedness between yourself and your loved ones?
5. What flows from the notion that "There is in this a portion of that one, and that one has a share in this one" is that "the other person is literally yourself." How do you relate to this perspective? Are there people with whom you have relationships whom you see as "literally yourself"? What would it take to expand that group of people?

Elul 5782

Tzelem Elokim – The Likeness of God

6. If you apply this perspective – that the other person is literally yourself – to someone with whom you have some difficulty in relationship, what implications would that perspective have for your conduct toward that person? Would you behave differently?

7. Here in the month of Elul with Rosh Hashanah quickly approaching, take stock of whether your own perspectives on other people fulfilled RaMak's directive that "one's eye be good towards the good of one's fellow." Has that been your perspective? If you can detect any traces of your eye being not so good toward others, what could you do to change that outlook?