

1. In a few moments we shall recite the Yizkor, in which we ask G-d to remember with compassion the souls of beloved, departed relatives. We shall mention by name those relatives with whom we today reassociate, and for whose remembrance we petition Gd.

And the fact that we so do, that we invoke the memory of individual human beings long after they have passed from this earthly scene, that we remember them by name, that we recall the love and tenderness of our personal relationships with them, betrays a profound respect for the individuality of the human being. It betrays an attitude of reverence for the individual as individual, as a human being, as someone worthy and possessing dignity.

This is, of course, a fundamental teaching of our Torah. Man is not just another animal, simply a highly developed mammal. He was created B'TZELEM ELOKIM, in the Image of G-d. He has a soul - and that means that he has individuality, that each and every person is uniquely the bearer of a Divine spark. When we grant the Bible's teaching that man is created in G-d's image, then we understand R. Akiva's exclamation, CHAVIV ADAM SHE'NIVRA B'TZELEM - Beloved is man that he was created in the Divine image. Man - each and every one of us - becomes beloved, precious, indispensable, irreplaceable ~~in a word, human~~. In a word, what Judaism teaches is that man is not a "thing", just another object. He is G-d-like, He is human. He is an individual. He is a "thou", not an "it". CHAVIV ADAM - man is beloved of G-d.

2. This would seem to be a perfectly obvious principle, a thesis that all accept. And yet it is unfortunately true that our world more often violates it than observe it. In our society, with its "groupism", its emphasis on "adjustment" and conformity, has tended to submerge the individual man in the mass, and to blur the uniqueness of each individual. We have begun to lose our reverence for the human personality. *When we lose our respect for a man's individuality, we lose our respect for all humanity. And when we respect humanity - we reverence the Divinity.*
- Just look at ~~business and its modern methods~~, some of the aspects of our daily life. We make a party and confide to a friend that it cost us so-much-and-so-much not per person - but per plate. We are impressed with a big funeral and we do not say there were so many friends or mourners - but so many cars. Our communities health facilities are gauged not as a certain number of patients that can be treated - but hospital beds. Our social agencies do not help people; they work on cases. We don't have children; we have mouths to feed. And more important - and more frightening: Madison Ave. has now turned to the psychologists for help, and a new kind of science called Motivational Research is being developed to manipulate the consumer and by subtle suggestion force him to buy any stated product. The customer is no longer another human being; he is a thing we manipulate for the sake of profit. Only recently the press told of a new and diabolical invention: "subliminal" flashes - rapid flashes on movie or TV screens which we can't see consciously but unconsciously can prod us to do the will of the master-mind who manipulates the machine or who pays for the advertisement. This is an invasion of our privacy, a sneak attack on our very selves which betrays an utter and total lack of respect for our human individuality, for our dignity as humans, not just objects, as men and not just as so many mouths. And if we permit this violence to our dignity as human beings to dominate in business, why not in politics, and so have ourselves herded like sheep before some totalitarian demagogue with a PhD in psychology? It is only when people disregard the truth that man was created B'TZELEM.... that we can no longer say CHAVIV ADAM, that he is unique and beloved and something special - not just an object, a thing.

Just compare this modern attitude to the Jewish teaching that every person is like

That man is a thing, an object. a tool, a means to an end. a cog in a machine

a Sefer Torah, and just as each Sefer Torah is different from the next because it is handwritten and not printed, and every handwriting is different, so is every human being different and unique and holy. Compare it to the Talmud's advise to respect differences in people's opinions as much as we respect differences in faces. Compare it to Philo's statement that the Ten Commandments were given in the singular - "Thou", not "you" - because ~~if~~ when one single individual obeys G-d's commandments he becomes equal in value to a whole nation and a whole world. Compare it to David's declaration that man is but little lower than the angels. Compare it to R. Shimon bar Yochai's explanation of the Torah's being given LE'ATNEY KOL YISROEL, the eyes of all Israel, that had one single Jew been missing from the 600,000 at Sinai, G-d would not have revealed Himself and the Torah never would have been given. Compare ~~it to the way~~ all this modern devaluation of the human being as such, his reduction to a thing, to an it, to a commodity, to the words we shall recite at Nei'lach: ATAF HIVIDALATA ENOSH ME'ROSH VA'TAKIBETHU LA'AMOD LFANECHA, "from the first Thou didst single out mortal man and consider him worthy to stand in Thy presence!" No, Torah never permits one man to use another, nor to regard him as a profitable inferior.

3. My dear friends: can you imagine how different our lives would be if we would follow this Jewish teaching? A cheap political adventurer would not be allowed to use a bunch of frenzied, hysterical, stupid people as his pawns in an attempt for 3rd term as Arkansas governor - for that is just what he has done: he has used his fellow whites and insulted their dignity as human beings. If CHAVIV ADAM, this would never occur. Petroleum interests would not use a whole nation and manipulate its foreign policy, as is being done to the US - in order to make bigger profits. CHAVIV ADAM - people would become as important as investments, and blood at least as precious as oil. The teacher who has learned the lesson of CHAVIV ADAM will develop an intimate personal relationship with her charge and not regard him as just another desk-occupant. The physician treats the whole man and as a man when he is accepted as ADAM. And when husband and wife cease to use each other, either as mere breadwinners or as objects of lust, then indeed CHAVIV ADAM, each becomes truly beloved of each other even as they are by G-d.
4. It is told of a census-taker who was canvassing the backwoods country in rural Oklahoma. He came to one cabin where there were many children about, and asked their mother for the pertinent information. "How many children do you have?" he asked. "Oh," she replied, "there's Bill and Horace and Ethel and..." "No, no," interrupted the impatient census-taker, "I want the number of children, not the names." At which the woman replied with indignation, "Mister, my children don't have numbers; they have names". That is what Torah teaches - CHAVIV ADAM, man is precious, he has each his individual name and is not just a statistic of population, not just an entry on birth records then marriage records and finally death records. CHAVIV ADAM.
5. Our Halacha gives an amazing practical application of this Jewish ideal. It involves our care and concern for the MEIS MITZVAH - an abandoned corpse, one who has died with no one to care for him. And the law is that even the KOHEN GADOL himself, and even on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, when the Kohen Gadol was on his way to the Holy Temple there to perform the most sacred service of the year, that this Kohen Gadol on this Yom Kippur day must himself care for the MEIS MITZVAH if he should chance upon him. Imagine: here was a man who probably never amounted to much in his lifetime, apparently no one missed him and no one cared for him, and yet the Kohen Gadol must take off his robes and roll up his shirt sleeves and dig a grave with his own hands and give this stranger the last respects - while all Israel waits on Mt. Zion, while the service is held up for him, while time is running short for the Yom Kippur offerings. Yet the Kohen Gadol must defile himself - and thus disqualify himself from all service in the Temple that day, so that a new Kohen Gadol will have to be appointed and minister that very day!! Still, the basic respect due to a human being takes precedence over the whole AVODAH! Why? Because of Torah's

deep reverence for the human being, even for this man who lies here tattered, shattered and in utter degradation, a man who probably was a vagrant, a derelict, a tramp and outsider all his life. The Kohen Gadol must defile himself not for the wealthy or learned or famous man - but for this vagrant who was rejected from his very youth, who as a baby probably never had a father drink a LCHAYYIM over him and receive a MAZAL TOV, over whom no mother shed a warm tear, for whose individual wants no one ever cared, with no one to ~~ever~~ pull the blanket over his frail, sleeping form in the cold, dark night, for this man who probably never was educated, never learned a trade, who never loved and never was loved, who bore all others a deep, resentful grudge, who probably developed into a thief or outcast, one for whose death no one cried and for whom no one sat SHIVAH - yet for him, who may have been the lowliest of all humans, the Kohen Gadol himself must be defiled and give him honor, even to the extent of cancelling the AVODAH in the Temple on Yom Kippur!

Why? - because here lies a shrine! - a shrine wherein the human heart once beat, a shrine where once the breath of life was breathed, a shrine where a soul was awakened, a shrine because every single human being is a TZELEM ELOKIM - a shrine because this is a MAN, and CHAVIV ADAM, each individual man is beloved of G-d.

What a sharp contrast this picture offers to our highly developed society where, no matter what the justification offered, the medical world salvages the bodies of just such vagrants and outcasts for anatomical dissection, human bodies which are then disposed of with so little sentiment and respect for what was once a human life. For our modern society treats the MEIS MITZVAH, the abandoned corpse, like a thing, an object to be used and manipulated for the benefit of others. How different is Jewish life where the Halacha requires reverence for all life and its containers, even for the remains of an unknown stranger, where it requires that those who care for the dead be not professional undertakers ~~in business for profit but~~ but pious, observant, deeply religious Jews who together form a burial society known as CHEVRA KADISHA- the Holy Society. That is how far Judaism goes in its concern for every individual human being!

6. And my friends, this difference in attitude between so much of the modern world and the classical Jewish world is not just academic. It may determine the future of you and me and our children and the whole world. In recent months a great debate has broken out in America: should we or should we not ban further testing of the H-Bomb, because if the danger from the nuclear fallout, a fallout which affects even us in Massachusetts. A distinguished group of citizens has asked that the govt discontinue any further tests because of the fact, among others, that ~~at the present~~ the fallout threatens to increase the number of cases of leukemia. The govt answered this argument by pointing out that at the present ~~rate of~~ ~~out~~-testing, the increase in leukemia over the next few decades will be very negligible - no more than 0.5%. This is a "small risk", the govt contends, and one worth taking for security reasons.

Well, what is the Jewish point of view? The Jewish concern for the individual goes to the core of the problem. It tells you that 0.5% looks like a very small figure - but that people are humans, not statistics, and translated into human terms, 0.5% means 10,000 individuals will be killed by fallout each year - individuals of all nationalities who work and love and laugh and want to live as much as you and I. When CHAVIV ADAM SHE'NIVRA B'TZELEM, then continued testing means ~~10~~ murdering the unique and irreplaceable image of G-d 10,000 times over gain every year. And no security reason can excuse such immoral mass murder! The verdict of Judaism is KOL HAMEKAYIM NEFESH ACHASS K'ILU KIYEM OLAM MALEI..VE'KOL HAME'ABED NEFESH ACHASS K'ILU IBED OLAM MALE - that saving one life is like saving a whole world, and destroying one life is destroying a universe. "Every single man is a world which is born and which dies with him; beneath every gravestone lies a world's history". ZEH SEFER TOLDOS HA'ADAM - the life of man is like the Torah, and when you harm the life of one single individual, you rip the whole Bible to shreds.

7. We conclude with the prayer we recite about 8 times on Yom Kippur, part of our VIDUY or confessional:

ATA YODEIA RAZEI OLAM, Almighty G-d, you know the secrets of the universe - you know what holds the cosmos together, the forces that keep the planets on their courses, the energy that binds the atom, the mysteries of exploding stars, to the outer fringes of the endless universe. How, in the face of such an immense world and such a great G-d can we poor mortals hope to win recognition? Are we not just insignificant specks on the face of the deep, without meaning and without permanence? And yet beloved is man who is created in Thy image - and therefore we know that you also know SA'ALUMOS SISREI KOL CHAY, the dark secrets of every living human, ATA CHOFEIS KOL CHADREI BATEN UVOCHEIN KLAYOS VA'LEIV, you search the innermost chambers of man's conscience and probe to the depths of his heart - we are important to you, significant in your eyes, our lives and our loves, our labors and our loyalties all are meaningful before you, UV'CHEIN, therefore, because of this importance and this dignity Thou hast given to men as men, YEHI RATZON MILFANECHA HASHEM ELOKEINU VE'LOKEINU AVOSEINU.....SHE'TISLACH LANU AL KOL CHATOSSEINU VE'SIMCHAL LANU AL KOL AVONOSSEINU USECHAPEIR LANU AL KOL P'SHA'EINU, to forgive all our sins, to pardon all our iniquities and grant atonement for all our transgressions; because we are endowed with a Divine spark and a Divine soul and a Divine Image which gives us dignity and uniqueness as individuals, we come before you with the thoughts of beloved individuals long since passed from this earth and gathered into Thy bosom, and pray:YIZKOR ELOKIM - remember them, O G-d.