



The Triumph of Life

Part II: The Supremacy of Life in Judaism

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I. *Pru U'rvu* – Be Fruitful and Multiply

Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 62a	תלמוד בבלי יבמות סב.
It is taught (in a <i>baraita</i>): Rabbi Natan says that Beit Shammai say: [The <i>mitzvah</i> to be fruitful and multiply is fulfilled with] two males and two females. And Beit Hillel say: A male and a female. Rav Huna said: What is the reason of Rabbi Natan, in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai? As it is written: “And again she bore his brother [et ahiv] Abel [et Hevel]” (Genesis 4:2) - Abel and his sister, Cain and his sister. And it states: “For God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him” (Genesis 4:25). And the Rabbis, how do they understand this verse? Eve was thanking God. It is taught in another <i>baraita</i> that Rabbi Natan says that Beit Shammai say: [The <i>mitzvah</i> to be fruitful and multiply is fulfilled with] a male and a female. And Beit Hillel say: Either a male or a female. Rava said: What is the reason of Rabbi Natan in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel? As it is stated: “He did not create it a waste; He formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18), and one has made the earth inhabited.	תניא: רבי נתן אומר: ב"ש אומרים שני זכרים ושתי נקבות, ובה"א זכר ונקבה. א"ר הונא: מ"ט דרבי נתן אליבא דב"ש? דכתיב (בראשית ד:ב): "ותוסף ללדת את אחיו את הבל" - הבל ואחותו, קין ואחותו. וכתיב (בראשית ד:כה): "כי שת לי אלהים זרע אחר תחת הבל כי הרגו קין". ורבנן? אודויי הוא דקא מודית. תניא אידך: ר' נתן אומר: ב"ש אומרים זכר ונקבה, ובה"א או זכר או נקבה. אמר רבא: מ"ט דר' נתן אליבא דב"ה? שנא' (ישעיהו מה:יח): "לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה" - והא עבד לה שבת.

Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 62b	תלמוד בבלי יבמות סב:
Grandchildren are considered like children: Abaye thought to say [if one's children die, he fulfills the <i>mitzvah</i> to be fruitful and multiply, provided] a son was born to his son and a daughter to his daughter, and all the more so if a son was born to his daughter. However, if a daughter was born to his son, no [she cannot take the place of her father]. Rava said to him: We require fulfillment of "He formed it to be inhabited," and it is fulfilled in this case.	בני בנים הרי הם כבנים: סבר אביי למימר ברא לברא וברתא לברתא, וכ"ש ברא לברתא. אבל ברתא לברא - לא. א"ל רבא: "לשבת יצרה" בעיא, והא איכא.

II. *Tzelem Elokim* – The Image of God

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Shlichut" [Messenger, mission], in <i>Yemei Zikaron</i> , pp. 9-11.
<u>The Image of God and Human Dignity</u> The fundamental value of human dignity is the conceptual basis for many laws - such as: burial, honoring the dead, impurity of a cohen, <i>meyt mitzvah</i>¹, <i>aninut</i>², mourning, an old person not being required to do certain acts if that act is not in accordance with his dignity, the prohibition of embarrassing someone in public, and other similar laws. It is even possible that all the commandments between a person and his fellow human beings are based on the value of human dignity. The Ramban has already ruled that the whole matter that the sons of Noah are obligated to keep seven basic commandments is derived from an even more basic view, which is that they are in "the image of God." In his commentary on the verse "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), the Ramban refers to the verse in the book of Psalms (8:6), where the phrase "in our image, after our likeness" was replaced by "and adorned him with honor and glory." The "image of God" was thus rearticulated as "the honor of God" - or in the language of the Sages - according to halakhah - "human dignity" (<i>kavod habriyot</i>). Of course, one can pose a simple question here: Is the longing and urge for the honor of God fundamentally a good attribute or a bad attribute according to Judaism? It goes without saying that if such a question is presented to the public, many answers will immediately be voiced, and

¹ *Meyt mitzvah* refers to an unclaimed dead body requiring burial out of respect for human dignity. The duty of burial becomes the highest priority of the person who discovers the corpse, even a high priest on the way to service in the inner sanctuary of the Holy of Holies must take responsibility for the burial even though it will make him impure and he will forfeit divine service.

² *Aninut* is the liminal state of having just lost a close relative to death but before the actual burial (after which the *shiva*, withdrawal into full mourning, begins).

probably all of these answers will include many sayings of Chazal, such as: "Jealousy and lust and honor remove a person from the world" (Avot 4:21), "Anyone who chases after greatness, greatness escapes from him" (Eruvin 13b). Then we may ask for what reason did the Torah go so far as to emphasize the matter of human dignity and how God surrounded man with dignity and splendor, if the pursuit of honor is a bad attribute from which one should stay away?

However, on the other hand, it is also possible to point to the matter of honor as an attribute of God. The Master of the Universe is called the "King of Glory" (Psalm 24) and glory itself is often associated with the names of God. "It is the Glory of God to conceal a matter" (Proverbs 25:2). If, therefore, honor is among the attributes of God, then also in regard to this attribute, the commandment of "walk in His ways" applies (Deuteronomy 28:9) – just as He is merciful, you too should be merciful; just as He is the King of Honor, so too you should be honored. In this respect, we understand why the value of human dignity plays such a central role in Judaism and why Judaism created the equation of "image of God" = "honor and glory".

However, the previous difficulty, that on the one hand there is condemnation and rejection of the pursuit of honor while on the other hand human dignity is raised to the highest level - this difficulty is unresolved. We can find the answer to this when we correctly analyze one *sugya* in Tractate Niddah.

The Gemara in Niddah (30b) says: And since he came into the world, an angel came and slapped him on the mouth ... and he does not go out from there [the womb] until they make him swear, as it says (Isaiah 45:23): "To me every knee shall bend, every tongue swear loyalty"; "To me every knee shall bend" - this is the day of death, as it says: "Before Him they shall bend the knee, all those at death's door" (Psalms 22:30); "every tongue swear loyalty" - this is the day of birth, as it says: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken a false oath by My life or sworn deceitfully" (ibid 24:4) And what is the oath that they make him swear? 'Be righteous and do not be wicked, and even if the whole world will say to you: You are righteous, be in your eyes as wicked, and know that God is pure and His servants are pure, and the soul He has given you is pure. If you keep it pure - great, and if not, I will take it from you.'

It goes without saying that this oath does not remove from a human being the capacity to choose and exercise free will. The Gemara in Niddah (16b) states that the angel asks God: "This drop [fertilized egg] – what will it become? Courageous or weak, smart or stupid, rich or poor?' But 'evil or righteous' is not mentioned, in accordance with Rabbi Hanina, as Rabbi Hanina said: 'Everything is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven.'"

It seems to me that in this *sugya* the conception of honor was formulated according to a metaphysical-philosophical view of the human personality. The foundation is what the Master of the Universe revealed to Moses in Egypt. The entire role of Moses in the history of our people can be understood according to this principle. But it was not limited to Moses, and it was not so simple. The

meaning of this principle is universal: "Now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh" (Exodus 3:10). A complete truth is revealed in this verse: Lord of the Universe, who is concealed and mysterious, Master of all, Infinite, the living Lord of the worlds, appoints as His messenger a flesh and blood mortal, who is here today and tomorrow is in the grave.

But, however, "the messenger of a man is like him" (Brakhot 5:5). How can an ephemeral existence be the messenger of the Lord of the worlds? Indeed, there is no complete answer to this question. There is no doubt, however, that Moses was the messenger of God "And He sent a messenger who freed us from Egypt" (Numbers 20:16). The secret in the matter "God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27) requires the human being to accept a mission from the Creator of the worlds and to form a relationship between them of Sender and agent. "The messenger of a man is like himself" - the messenger of God was created in His image. If it was possible for Moses to be chosen as God's messenger, then it is possible for every Jew.

III. The Capacities of God

Consciousness

Psalms 147:4-5	תהילים קמז:ד-ה
⁴ He reckoned the number of the stars; to each He gave its name. ⁵ Great is our Lord and full of power; His wisdom/consciousness is beyond reckoning.	⁴ מוֹנֶה מִסְפָּר לְכֹכָבִים לְכֹל שְׁמוֹת ⁵ יְקָרָא: גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב-כֹּחַ לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפָּר:

Power

Psalms 147:5	תהילים קמז:ד-ה
Great is our Lord and full of power; His wisdom/consciousness is beyond reckoning.	גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב-כֹּחַ לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפָּר:

Relationship (love)

Psalms 145:9	תהילים קמז:ד-ה
The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is upon all His works.	טוֹב-יְהוָה לְכֹל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל-כָּל-מַעֲשָׂיו:

Exodus 33:17	שמות לג:יז
And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, גַּם אֶת-הַדָּבָר

have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name.”	הָזֶה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּרְתָּ אֵעָשֶׂה: כִּי-מִצָּאתָ חֵן בְּעֵינַי, וְאִדְעָךָ בְּשֵׁם.
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Exodus 34:6-7	שמות לד:ו-ז
⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed: “The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, ⁷extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children’s children, upon the third and fourth generations.”	⁶וַיַּעֲבֵר יְהוָה עַל-פָּנָיו, וַיִּקְרָא, יְהוָה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵי רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן--אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת. ⁷נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאֲלָפִים, נֹשֵׂא עוֹן וּפֹשֵׁעַ וְחַטָּאָה; וְנִקָּה, לֹא יִנָּקֶה--פֶּקֶד עוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בָנִים, עַל-שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים.

Freedom

Exodus 3:13-14	שמות ג:יג-יד
¹⁴Moses said to God, “When I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴And God said to Moses, “Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh.” He continued, “Thus shall you say to the Israelites, ‘Ehyeh sent me to you.’”	¹³וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים, הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם; וְאָמְרוּ-לִי מִה-שְּׁמוֹ, מִה אֲמַר אֲלֵהֶם. ¹⁴וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה; וַיֹּאמֶר, כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶהְיֶה, שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם.

Exodus 33:19	שמות לג:יט
And He answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show.	וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲנִי אַעֲבִיר כָּל-טוֹבִי עַל-פָּנֶיךָ, וְקִרְאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה, לְפָנֶיךָ; וְחַנּוּתִי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן, וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם.

IV. Pikuakh Nefesh – Saving a Life

I Maccabees 2:29-41
²⁹At that time many went down to dwell in the desert, seeking Justice and Vindication, ³⁰they and their children and their wives and their cattle, hard pressed by the persecutions. ³¹A report came to the king’s men and to the forces in Jerusalem, the City of David, that men who had violated the command of the king had gone down to the hiding places in the desert. ³²With a large force they pursued them and on coming upon them, they encamped and formed in battle line against them on

the Sabbath day, ³³ saying to them, "Come out to us and obey the word of the king, and we shall let you live." ³⁴ They, however, replied, "We shall neither come out nor obey the word of the king to profane the Sabbath day!" ³⁵ Accordingly, they advanced quickly upon them in battle line. ³⁶ But the Jews neither replied to them nor hurled a stone at them nor blocked the entrances to their hiding places, ³⁷ saying, "Let us all die in our innocence. Heaven and earth bear witness over us, that you condemn us unjustly." ³⁸ They attacked them in battle line on Sabbath. They were killed with their wives, their children, and their cattle, to the number of one thousand human beings.

³⁹ When the news reached Mattathias and his friends, they were deeply grieved over the victims' fate. ⁴⁰ They said to one another, "If we all do as our brothers have done and do not fight against the gentiles for our lives and our laws, they will now quickly wipe us off the face of the earth." ⁴¹ On that day they came to a decision: "If any man comes against us in battle on the Sabbath day, we shall fight against him and not all die as our brothers died in their hiding places."

Babylonian Talmud Yoma 83a	תלמוד בבלי יומא פג.
Mishnah. ... And furthermore, Rabbi Matya ben Ḥarash said: With regard to one who suffers pain in his throat, one may place medicine inside his mouth on Shabbat. This is because there is uncertainty whether or not it is a life-threatening situation, and a case of uncertainty concerning a life-threatening situation overrides Shabbat. With regard to one upon whom a rockslide fell, and there is uncertainty whether he is there under the debris or not; and there is uncertainty whether he is alive or dead; and there is uncertainty whether the person under the debris is a gentile or a Jew, one clears the pile from atop him. If they found him alive after beginning to clear the debris, they continue to clear the pile until they can extricate him. And if they found him dead, they should leave him.	מתני' ... ועוד אמר ר' מתיא בן חרש החושש בגרוננו מטילין לו סם בתוך פיו בשבת מפני שהוא ספק נפשות וכל ספק נפשות דוחה את השבת. מי שנפלה עליו מפולת ספק הוא שם ספק אינו שם ספק חי ספק מת ספק כותי ספק ישראל מפקחין עליו את הגל. מצאוהו חי מפקחין ואם מת יניחוהו.

Babylonian Talmud Yoma 85a	תלמוד בבלי יומא פה.
The Gemara relates: It once happened that Rabbi Yishmael, and Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya were walking on the road, and Levi HaSadar and Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, were walking behind them. This question was asked before them: From where is it derived that saving a life overrides Shabbat? Rabbi Yishmael answered and said that it is stated: "If a thief be found breaking in and be struck so that he dies, there shall be no blood-guiltiness for him" (Exodus 22:1). Now, if this is true for the	וכבר היה ר' ישמעאל ורבי עקיבא ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה מהלכין בדרך ולוי הסדר ורבי ישמעאל בנו של רבי אלעזר בן עזריה מהלכין אחריהן נשאלה שאלה זו בפניהם מניין לפקוח נפש שדוחה את השבת?

thief, where there is uncertainty whether he comes to take money or to take lives, and it is known that bloodshed renders the land impure, and it causes the Divine Presence to depart from the Jewish people, and even so the homeowner is permitted to save himself at the cost of the thief's life, then a fortiori saving a life overrides Shabbat. Rabbi Akiva answered and said that it is stated: "And if a man comes purposefully upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die" (Exodus 21:14). The phrase "take him from My altar" implies that if the murderer is a priest and comes to perform the service, one does not wait for him to do so but takes him to his execution immediately. But one should not take him from on top of My altar (if he already began the service, allow him to finish his service). And Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said: They taught only that a priest is not removed from the altar in order to execute him for murder, but to preserve a life one removes him even from on top of My altar. Just as this priest, about whom there is uncertainty whether there is substance to his words of testimony or whether there is no substance to his words, is taken from the Temple service in order to save a life, and Temple service overrides Shabbat, so too, a fortiori, saving a life overrides Shabbat. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya answered and said: Just as the mitzva of circumcision, which rectifies only one of the 248 limbs of the body, overrides Shabbat, so too, a fortiori, saving one's whole body, overrides Shabbat. Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says that it is stated: "But keep my Shabbatot" (Exodus 31:13). One might have thought that this applies to everyone in all circumstances; therefore, the verse states "but," a term that restricts and qualifies (there are circumstances where one must keep Shabbat and circumstances where one must desecrate it, i.e., to save a life). Rabbi Yonatan ben Yosef says that it is stated: "For it is sacred to you" (Exodus 31:14). This implies that Shabbat is given into your hands, and you are not given to it to die on account of Shabbat.	נענה ר' ישמעאל ואמר (שמות כב:א) "אם במחתרת ימצא הגנב" ומה זה שספק על ממון בא ספק על נפשות בא ושפיכות דמים מטמא את הארץ וגורם לשכינה שתסתלק מישראל ניתן להצילו בנפשו ק"ו לפקוח נפש שדוחה את השבת. נענה ר"ע ואמר (שמות כא:יד) "וכי יזיד איש על רעהו וגו' מעם מזבחי תקחנו למות" - מעם מזבחי ולא מעל מזבחי. ואמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן לא שנו אלא להמית אבל להחיות אפילו מעל מזבחי. ומה זה שספק יש ממש בדבריו ספק אין ממש בדבריו ועבודה דוחה שבת, קל וחומר לפקוח נפש שדוחה את השבת. נענה רבי אלעזר ואמר ומה מילה שהיא אחד ממאתים וארבעים ושמונה איברים שבאדם דוחה את השבת קל וחומר לכל גופו שדוחה את השבת. רבי יוסי בר' יהודה אומר (שמות לא:יג) "את שבתותי תשמורו" יכול לכל? ת"ל "אך" חלק. רבי יונתן בן יוסף אומר (שמות לא:יד) "כי קודש היא לכם" היא מסורה בידיכם ולא אתם מסורים בידה.
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Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said: It is stated: “And the children of Israel shall keep Shabbat, to observe Shabbat” (Exodus 31:16). The Torah said: Desecrate one Shabbat on his behalf so he will observe many Shabbatot. Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: If I would have been there among those Sages who debated this question, I would have said that my proof is preferable to theirs, as it states: “You shall keep My statutes and My ordinances, which a person shall do and live by them” (Leviticus 18:5), and not that he should die by them.	ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומר (שמות לא:טז) "ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת" אמרה תורה חלל עליו שבת אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה. א"ר יהודה אמר שמואל אי הואי התם הוה אמינא דידי עדיפא מדידהו (ויקרא יח:ה) "וחי בהם" ולא שימות בהם.
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