

walking with the image of gd

me'or einayim on bechukosai

translation by bas-sheva bas malka

If in my statutes you will walk,

and my mitzvos, you will keep,

and you will do them:

then I will grant your rains/bodies¹ in their time.

Vayikra 26:3-4

Here, "statutes" are the mitzvos that have no reason, and "mitzvos" are those that have a reason.

And why did he say "you will walk" [regarding statutes], and "you will keep" [regarding mitzvos]?

Also, what is "and you will do them" [doing here]? Since they will *keep* [the mitzvos], surely they will *do* [them]!

And further difficulties for the commentators, [like] why is only the physical reward written here?²

1 The Hebrew word for "rain" here is **מים**, which also means "body". In Hasidic thought, it comes to refer to physicality in general, the material world.

2 Peer Mikdoshim's edition gives Abarbanel as an example: "Why were all the promises of the Torah and her reward physical things [like rain], as mentioned in this covenant, and not perfection of the soul and the reward of the spirit after death?"

But it is true that in the Torah there is a spiritual body made from the 248 spiritual limbs, which are the 248 mitzvos to “do!”, along with the 365 spiritual sinews, which are the 365 [mitzvos to] “not do!” And in the human being, there are also 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

And indeed, the human was created *b'tzelem elokim*, in the image of gd. And we need to understand this matter, and how it is appropriate to say anything about the Blessed One involving form or shape, gd forbid.

Indeed, the [proper] interpretation [of *b'tzelem elokim*] is “*b'tzelem hatorah*” [in the image of the Torah]. Because the Torah is called *elokim*, which is contraction, in that the Name (may It be blessed) contracted Its essence to within the Torah, so that it would be possible for a human – an inhabitant of boundary and limit – to cleave herself with the Name (may It be blessed), which is without boundary and limit (and so it would [seem to] be impossible [for a human] to cleave with the Blessed One).

Therefore the Name (may It be blessed) contracted Its essence into the Torah, and a human was created in the image of *elokim* – in the image of the Torah, which is the spiritual body of the 248 commandments to “do!” and the 365 [commandments to] “not do!”

And behold: the human is complete when she is one with the image, that is, when her physical body is one with the spiritual body of the Torah (the “higher human”) -- and when she stirs a physical limb [below], she stirs and awakens a higher limb [above].

And this is called a “complete human”, as it says: *surely with the image a person³ walks about* (Psalms 39:7).

That is to say: someone who walks with the image, who is one with the image, is then called a “person”. But, when she has not done some mitzvah, or she has transgressed some transgression, then she is lacking one [spiritual] limb or one [spiritual] sinew, and is not complete.⁴

And so: why were we commanded to do the statutes, which have no reason? It is because mitzvos that have a reason have no need for any faith when doing them, because one understands that it is necessary to act in a particular way. But a person will only do the statutes when she trusts that there is a Creator (blessed be It) that has said to act thusly, and that it is necessary to do Its will.

And behold, faith is called feet, because it is the feet that stand up the Torah. Because before anything else, it is necessary to trust that there is a Creator (blessed be It) -- *It spoke and it was; It commanded and it stood* (Psalms 33:9).

Like it says: *Khabakuk came and stood [the mitzvos] up on one [verse], as it is stated, “And the righteous person will live in her faith”* (Makkos 24a, Khabakuk 2:4).

3 The best translation of “person” here is “mensch”. That is, a person as a person is meant to be. See Pirkei Avos 2:5, “In a place where there are no people, strive to be a person.” Note the Hebrew throughout is *אדם*/man.

4 The idea that a person lacking some *physical* limb or sinew is “incomplete” is clearly ableist. Is the spiritual analog distinct? There’s a tension throughout this piece for me between sanctifying physical embodiment and (potentially) attributing certain kinds of embodiment with better/worse spiritual characteristics, gd forbid.

And this is [the meaning of our verse]:

If in my statutes you will walk...

Because statutes are the mitzvos that have no reason, and they depend on faith. Therefore, he said "you will walk", because faith is called feet as mentioned above.

...and do them...

This wants to say: you will do the commandments *upward*, that you will complete the *higher* body.

Then I will grant your rains/bodies in their time.

This wants to say: all that you will do, even for your physical nature, *all* will be joined with the higher body.

Even eating and drinking, and all the rest of the physical things, *all* will be joined with the higher body.

Blessed is Hashem forever, amen v'amen.
