

A Person's Face

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

“Woh-ahhh-ow!” yelled Dovid as he went flying through the hallway after slipping in the puddle that the school janitor had left in the hallway. Dovid landed on his back with a big thud on and lay there for a few seconds wondering why he had never noticed that the ceiling was painted light beige. But he recovered quickly enough to run over to Elazar and Yehuda who had seen everything.

“How can the janitor be such a *shlemazel* and wet the floor without warning us?!” Dovid said to his friends. “And he knows that we’re coming up from lunch now! Why didn’t he put down the caution sign?! He’s a waste of the school’s money!”

Even though Dovid was only whispering, Pinny the Janitor knew exactly what he was saying and the blood drained from his face in embarrassment. He wanted to apologize but Rabbi Hertzberg, the elementary school principal, had already grabbed Dovid by the hand, pulled him into the office and asked if he was OK.

“Yeah,” said Dovid. “Just very wet, I guess. Boruch Hashem for that. I could have broken my back because of that janitor!”

“Actually Dovid, that’s why I called you in here to speak with you in private. I’m sorry it had to happen this way, but I think that your slipping in the ‘janitor’s water’



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is a good opportunity for you to learn a lesson. And that is that that man outside mopping the floors is not just a janitor. He's a person! His name is Pinny Ben-Ami.

"That's what you wanted to tell me?" said Dovid. "That he's a person? Aren't all janitors people?"

"Exactly!" said Rabbi Hertzberg. "That's exactly what I wanted to speak to you about – what it means to be 'a person'."

Rabbi Hertzberg opened the chumash Bereishis that was on his desk and looked at Dovid. "I'm going to read to you an interesting possuk in this week's parsha and then we'll figure out together what it's teaching us. Listen to these words carefully: 'And Hashem made Adam in His image.' Hashem is telling us here that when He created man, He didn't just choose to make him like He made the elephants and the kangaroos and the caterpillars. He made Adam look like Him!"

"But Rabbi Hertzberg, that's impossible! Nobody knows what Hashem looks like. I'm sure He doesn't look like me. I have big ears and freckles. And He probably doesn't even look like you, even though you have a beard and everything."

"Exactly!" said Rabbi Hertzberg. "That's why the mefarshim spent a lot of time trying to understand what this possuk is talking about. Because it's not letting us know that Hashem has a nose and lips and ears – that's for sure! So what does it mean that we are all made in His image?"

"I'm not sure," said Dovid. "Maybe it's one of those secret things like kabbalah; the mysterious stuff that most people are not able to understand."

"That's true, Dovid," said Rabbi Hertzberg. "I'm sure it also has some very deep meaning that only special tzadikim understand, but my rebbi, Rav Avigdor Miller zatzal, taught us that every possuk in the Torah is meant to be understood by everyone even on a simple level. And he said that some of the most important secrets for

how to see things in this world the way Hashem wants us to see them are in the simple pshat of the pesukim.

"So what is the simple secret of this possuk?" asked Dovid. "Am I allowed to know?"

"Sure," smiled Rabbi Hertzberg. "That's why I called you into my office. And you'll be very surprised to hear that this possuk is talking about Pinny! The possuk is telling us that Hashem made Pinny in His image."

"Pinny?! The janitor Pinny?! Hashem doesn't look like me or you, but He looks like Pinny?! You mean Hashem is bald?!"

"No, Dovid. The possuk is not talking about how we look. It's not saying that every person looks like Hashem but that every person has some of the greatness of Hashem in them. When Hashem made Adam it says that "He blew into his nose". And that means that Hashem put a little bit of Himself, a little bit of his infinite perfection into every human being. And because of that every person you see should be treated with great respect.

That man mopping the floors is not "the janitor." Just the fact that you've been in yeshiva for a month already and don't know his name means that you haven't fulfilled this possuk in our parsha. He's Pinny – a real person, with real feelings, who has greatness within him and that's something to think about every time you see him."

Dovid walked out of Rabbi Hertzberg's office knowing that he had some work to do. What good is it to learn the secret of a possuk if you're not going to fulfill it?

And so Dovid walked to the hallway where Pinny was mopping, and called out with a smile, "Hi Mr. Pinny! Thank you for keeping everything so clean! We appreciate it!"

And Dovid walked away knowing that from now on he was going to treat everyone with a smile and respect – because that's the only thing that a person made in the image of Hashem deserves.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!



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