



**Rabbi Uri
Pilichowski**

**Precious In God's
Eyes**

If asked, what would you say is the greatest benefit to being born and being alive? My answer comes from the third chapter of Pirkei Avot and a teaching of Rebbe Akiva. The 17th Mishna teaches, “Beloved are people for they were created in the image of God; an extra love is made known to people who were created in God’s image, as it is written in the Torah, (Genesis 9:6) “For in His own image G-d made humankind”.

In his commentary to this Mishna, Rabbenu Yona explained that there are two different lessons taught in this Mishna. The first is that people were created in the image of God, meaning that a human being shares certain Divine qualities. Second is that he is let in on the fact that he was created in God’s image. By knowing the talents and potential man possesses, he is able to use those talents to accomplish much more.

The Rambam teaches in his *Moreh Nevuchim* that our being created in the image of God is not a physical representation of God, but rather a sharing of the Divine intellect. What greater gift could we have been

given to actualize?

Rebbe Akiva taught an even more profound lesson: The Jewish people were given more than other nations: “Beloved are the Jews that they are called children to God; an extra love is made known to them that they are called children to God, as it is written in the Torah, (Devarim 14:1) “You are children of the Lord your God.” As Jews, we are considered the children of God and merit special Divine attention and providence. As the Ibn Ezra wrote in his commentary to this posuk, we are supposed to recognize our fate is in God’s hands and we should not worry when times are challenging.

**The greatest gift of all is the
opportunity to observe the
Torah’s mitzvot**

In our sedra of Ki Tavo we read, “This day, the Lord, your God, is commanding you to fulfill these statutes and ordinances, and you will observe and fulfill them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have selected the Lord this day, to be your God, and to walk in His ways, and to observe His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and to obey Him.” (Devarim 26:16-17) The Sforno comments that ‘fulfilling the Torah with all of your

heart' means that you have no doubt that it is God's will for you to do the mitzvos. With all of your soul means to not allow your desire to overcome both your recognition of God and that the mitzvot are God's mitzvot.

We are privileged to have been created in God's image and to be the "children of God." We are blessed to hold a treasured position in the universe. The greatest gift of all is the opportunity to observe the Torah's mitzvot. It is through the observance of the Torah that we recognize God and the gifts that have been given to us. As Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur approach, we should remember the gifts we have been granted, repent for the times we forgot this truth, and recommit to stronger observance in the future. ■

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