

Perceptions • Tishrei 5, 5786 • September 27, 2025 • Issue #2115

Vayajilech

First of all, *Shannab Tovab uMesukab*. May 5786 be a prosperous year for *Klal Yisroel*, filled only with blessing.

Chazal have told us, “. . . Be cautious in judgement (*mesunim b'din*), establish many pupils, and make a fence around the Torah (*Pirkei Avos* 1:3). The *Ansbei K'nesses HaGedolah*—Men of the Great Assembly—said many things, especially since many of them were prophets. Why focus on these three in particular to begin *Pirkei Avos*?

The question is not mine, having been asked many times by others before I even thought to ask it myself. The answer I want to offer, apropos to *Shabbos Shuvah*, is based upon something I recently saw in the *Sba'arei Chochmah*, a commentary on the GR”A’s commentary on *Sifra D’Tzniusa*.

A little introduction first. A body mimics the *sefiros*. Those are the spiritual entities God created to allow His light to come into the world, build everything it does, and run all of history. Since everything is made from His light, everything is by definition always and only an expression of His will, even the things that seem to go against it.

This means that we have a skull (*Keser*) because there is a conceptual skull in the *sefiros*. We have three parts to the brain because the *sefiros* do as well (*Chochmah*, *Binah*, and *Da’as*). There are three *sefiros* that correspond to our upper body (*Chesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tifferes*), and three that correspond to our lower body (*Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*).

The body parts to *sefiros* correlation gets even more specific. There are counterparts to our forehead, eyes, nose, ears, and mouth, etc., and they all function similarly, except they are all means to transfer the light of God from level to another, filter it when necessary, and cause to happen whatever it is that God wants to happen to direct Creation to completion. The full story, at least as much of it as we know, is

mind-boggling.

The only one I want to focus on for now is the ears. The eyes work differently than the ears, taking in all the information in a moment. This, plus a direct connection to the brain, leads to quick, and often faulty processing. This is why we have a *mitzvah* to judge a person to the side of merit when we see them do something questionable because we might be wrong about our assumption.

The ears, on the other hand, can only take in information in pieces, which then goes through a winding channel before it finally makes it to the brain. It's a much slower process, which is why people tend to linger longer when overhearing a conversation of interest. This, together with the *kabbalistic* idea that the level of the ears in the *sefiros* is the one on which a person distinguishes between good and evil, teaches the necessity of deliberating in judgment:

Thus, we learn that the ability to distinguish [between good and bad] does not come quickly, rather from allowing something to remain in its place. This is the ability to contemplate and distinguish something. (*Sba'arei Chochmah, Sifra D'Tzniusa, Ch. 2, 13a*)

This fundamental of life is both obvious and not obvious. When it comes to potential loss of something we greatly value, like money or life itself, we don't like to be rushed into a decision. We tend to feel a lack of confidence and strive for more time to be sure about our conclusions.

But in so many other areas of life where we should act the same way, which is just about everywhere else, people are comfortable jumping to conclusions. They choose first and ask questions later, if at all. There is such poor judgment the world over, and I suspect more so today than in past generations. People are bombarded by so much information, most of it biased and often in error, that they probably don't have time to deliberate or even to think that they have to.

But that only reveals that people don't realize the heaviness of what they are misjudging. Humans err, but when they do it because they don't take the time that they have to know the bottom-line truth about something, then their errors count against them. The Sforno says that we were made "*b'tzelem Elokim*" because it is a Name of God that implies deliberation and responsible judgment. It's what we have over everything else in Creation, and when we don't use it, we lose it.

That's when people start doing the strangest of things. They sin in the most incomprehensible ways. They say the most ridiculously dangerous things. They side with what they should really oppose. They seem to lack all judgment whatsoever, at least in the areas where they didn't use it properly.

We're in the *Aseres Yemai Teshuvah* heading for Yom Kippur, *b"H*. We're going to say *Viduy*—Confessional—seven times throughout the day. That's to make us think about what matters most to us, and to consider if we're right or wrong about it.

It says in this week's *parsha*:

God said to Moshe: "Behold, you are [about to] lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray after the deities of the nations of the land, into which they are coming. And they will forsake Me and violate My covenant which I made with them." (Devarim 31:16)

Not much has changed in over 3,300 years, especially the reason why this happens. People just don't take enough time to think about what counts most in life, and why, especially to God. We've had a few days so far to think about this, and a couple more before Yom Kippur to think about it more. What a gift. Treat it that way.

Good *Shabbos* and *Gmar Tov*,

Pinchas Winston

thirtysix.org / shaarnunproductions.org