

The Millie Arbesfeld  
**Midreshet Yom Rishon**

Sunday Morning Learning Program for Women

[WWW.MIDRESHETYOMRISHON.ORG](http://WWW.MIDRESHETYOMRISHON.ORG)

**והלכת בדרכיו:**  
*How Do I  
Emulate an  
Incomprehensible  
God?*

This morning's Midreshet Yom  
Rishon is sponsored by  
Avi and Elin Freilich in memory of  
Devora Slava bas Reb Yitzchak A'H



**Dr. Shira Weiss**  
כג' חשוון תשע"ב • November 20, 2011

**(1) ישעיהו (נה:ח)**

כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם ולא דרכיכם דרכי נאם ה':

**(2) דברים (יג:ה)**

אתרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו ואתו תיראו ואת מצותיו תשמרו ובקלו תשמעו ואתו תעבדו ובו תדבקו:

**(3) דברים (כח:ט)**

יקימך יקנוק לו לעם קדוש פאשר נשבע לך כי תשמר את מצות יקנוק אלהיך והלכת בדרכיו:

**(4) דברים (י:יב)**

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלהיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולא הבה אתו ולעבד את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך:

**5) Be'er Mayim Hayyim – R. Chaim Thirer of Czernotzthe**

The fundamental reason for the creation of man is that he is to make himself as much like his Creator as he can.

**6) Imitatio Dei, M. Buber**

The imitation of God, and of the real God, not of the wishful creation; the imitation, not of a mediator in human form, but of God himself—this is the central paradox of Judaism. A paradox, for how should man be able to imitate God, the invisible, incomprehensible, unformed, not-to-be-formed? One can only imitate that of which one has an idea- no matter whether it be an idea springing from the imagination or from memory; but as soon as one forms an idea of God, it is no longer He whom one conceives, and an imitation founded on this conception would be no imitation of Him.

**7) Guide of the Perplexed III:54, Maimonides**

The fourth species is the true perfection; it consists of the acquisition of the rational virtues- I refer to the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things. This is in true reality the ultimate end, that is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance; through it man is man... It is clear that the perfection of man that may truly be gloried in is the one acquired by him who has achieved, in a measure corresponding to his capacity, apprehension of Him, and who knows His providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is. The way of life of such an individual, after he has achieved this apprehension, will always have in view loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment, through assimilation to His *actions*.

**(8) רמב"ם – הלי' יסודי התורה (א:א,ו)**

יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון... וידיעת דבר זה מצות עשה...

The foundation of foundations and the pillar of all the sciences is that there is a First Being... And this knowledge is a positive commandment.

### **9) Guide of the Perplexed, I:58, Maimonides**

He Who is such that when the intellects contemplate His essence, their apprehension turns into incapacity... and when the tongues aspire to magnify Him by means of attributive qualifications, all eloquence turns into weariness and incapacity!

#### **(10 שמות (לג:יב-כג)**

(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֵל יְקֹנֵךְ רְאֵה אֶתָּה אִמְרָא אֱלֹהִים הֵעֵל אֶת הָעַם הַזֶּה וְאֶתָּה לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאֶתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ יְדַעְתִּיךָ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם מִצְאָתְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינַי: (יג) וְעַתָּה אִם נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֵת דְּרָכְךָ וְאֶדְעֶךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרְאֵה כִּי עִמָּךְ הִגֹּי הַזֶּה: (יד) וַיֹּאמֶר פְּנִי יִלְכוּ וְהִנְחֵתִי לָךְ: (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם אֵין פְּנִיךָ הַלְכִים אֵל תַּעֲלֵנִי מִזֶּה: (טז) וּבְמָה יוֹדַע אֶפְוֹא כִּי מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעִמָּךְ הֲלוֹא בְּלִכְתְּךָ עִמָּנִי וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעִמָּךְ מִכָּל הָעַם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: פ (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֵךְ אֵל מֹשֶׁה גַם אֵת הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעֲשֶׂה כִּי מִצְאָתְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְאֶדְעֶךָ בְּשֵׁם: (יח) וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרָאִנִּי נָא אֵת כְּבֹדְךָ: (יט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲעֲבִיר כָּל טוֹבֵי עַל פְּנֶיךָ וְקִרְאָתִי בְּשֵׁם יְקֹנֵךְ לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנֹּתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אַחֲזֵן וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם: (כ) וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֵת פְּנֵי כִּי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחִי: (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֵךְ הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצְבָּתְךָ עַל הַצּוּר: (כב) וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשִׁפְתֵי כָפִי עָלֶיךָ עַד עֶבְרִי: (כג) וְהִסְרֵתִי אֵת כָּפִי וְרָאִיתָ אֵת אַחֲרָי וּפְנֵי לֹא יִרְאוּ: ס

### **11) Guide of the Perplexed I:54, Maimonides**

Moshe made two requests and received an answer to both of them. One request consisted in his asking Him to let him know His essence and true reality. The second request, which he put first, was that He should let him know His attributes. The answer to the two requests that He gave him consisted in His promising him to let him know all His attributes, making it known to him that they are His actions, and teaching him that His essence cannot be grasped as it really is... His request regarding the knowledge of [God's] attributes is conveyed in his saying: *Show me now Thy ways* (Shemot 33:13)... Then he asked for the apprehension of His essence. That is what he means when he says, *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory* (Shemot 33:18); whereupon he received a [favorable] answer with regard to what he had asked for at first- namely, *Show me Thy ways*. For he was told: *I will make all My goodness pass before thee* (Shemot 33:19). In answer to his second demand, he was told: *Thou canst not see My face* (Shemot 33:20).

### **12) Guide of the Perplexed I:58**

Know that the description of God by means of negations is the correct description- a description that is not affected by an indulgence in facile language and does not imply any deficiency with respect to God in general or in any particular mode... Thus the attributes of negation bring about some particularization even if the particularization due to them only exists in the exclusion of what has been negated from the sum total of things that we had thought of as not being negated... As for the negative attributes, they are those that must be used in order to conduct the mind toward that which must be believed with regard to Him, for no notion of multiplicity can attach to Him and, moreover, they conduct the mind toward the utmost reach that man may attain in the apprehension of Him... Accordingly we say of Him, because of these notions, that He is powerful and knowing and willing. The intention in ascribing these attributes to Him is to signify that He is neither powerless nor ignorant nor inattentive nor negligent.

### **13) Guide of the Perplexed I:54**

God is said to be merciful... it is not that He is affected and has compassion. But an action similar to that which proceeds from a father in respect to his child and that is attached to compassion, pity and an absolute passion, proceeds from Him... For the utmost virtue of man is

to become like unto Him, as far as He is able; which means that we should make our actions like unto Him, as the Sages made clear when interpreting the verse, *Ye shall be holy* (Vayikra 19:2). They said: *He is gracious, so be you also gracious; He is merciful, so be you also merciful.* (Siphre to *Devarim* 10:12) The purpose of all this is to show that the attributes ascribed to Him are attributes of His actions and that they do not mean that He possesses qualities.

#### **14 ספר המצוות להרמב"ם (מ"ע ח')**

להדמות בדרכיו הטובים והישרים שנ' והלכת בדרכיו.

Walking in God's ways: By this injunction we are commanded to be like God as far as it is in our power. This injunction is contained in His words, *and walk in His ways* (*Devarim* 28:9), and also in an earlier verse in His words *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways* (*Devarim* 10:12). On this latter verse the Sages comment as follows: "Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, is *called* Merciful, so shouldst thou be merciful; just as He is *called* Gracious, so shouldst thou be gracious; just as He is *called* Righteous, so shouldst thou be righteous; just as He is *called* Saintly [*hasid*], so shouldst thou be saintly. This injunction has already appeared in another form, in His words, *After the Lord shall ye walk* (*Devarim* 13:5), which the Sages explain as meaning that we are to imitate the acts of lovingkindness and sublime attributes by which the Lord is described in a figurative way, for He is immeasurably exalted above all such descriptions.

#### **15 רמב"ם – הל' דעות (א:ה-ו)**

ומצוין אנו ללכת בדרכים האלו הבינונים והם הדרכים הטובים והישרים שנאמר והלכת בדרכיו. כך למדו בפירוש מצוה זו, מה הוא נקרא חנון אף אתה היה חנון, מה הוא נקרא רחום אף אתה היה רחום, מה הוא נקרא קדוש אף אתה היה קדוש.

We are bidden to walk in the middle paths which are the right and proper ways, as it is said, *And walk in His ways*. In explanation of the text just quoted the Sages taught: "Even as God is *called* gracious, be thou gracious; even as He is *called* merciful, be thou merciful; even as He is *called* holy, be thou holy."

#### **16 תלמוד בבלי – מס' סוטה (יד).**

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: (דברים יג) אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: (דברים ד) כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: (בראשית ג) ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, אף אתה הלבש ערומים; הקב"ה ביקר חולים, דכתיב: (בראשית יח) וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, אף אתה בקר חולים; הקב"ה ניחם אבלים, דכתיב: (בראשית כה) ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך אלהים את יצחק בנו, אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקב"ה קבר מתים, דכתיב: (דברים לד) ויקבר אותו בגיא, אף אתה קבור מתים.

R Hama bar Hanina said: Why does it say: "After the Lord shall ye walk" (*Devarim* 13:5)? Is it possible to walk after the *Shekinah*? Is He not a consuming fire (*Devarim* 4:24)? Rather, it means that one should imitate His ways. As God clothed Adam and Eve (*Bereishit* 3:21), so should we clothe the naked; as He visited the ailing (Rashi, *Bereishit* 18:1), so should we visit the sick; as He comforted Isaac after Abraham's death (Rashi, *Bereishit* 25:11), so should we comfort the mourners; as He buried Moses (*Devarim* 34:6), so should we care for the dignity of the dead.

**17) Midrash haGadol**

As Scripture says, ‘Come, and see the works of God; He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men’ (*Tehillim* 66:5)- this verse refers to the deeds through which God governs His world, embodying one of the four qualities that are appropriately employed by God alone and not by man, i.e., jealousy, vengeance, pride, and cunning.

**(18 במדבר (כה:יא-יג))**

(יא) פִּינָחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אֶהֱרֹן הִפְתִּיחַ אֶת הַשִּׁיב אֶת חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאָתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא כְלִי־תִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאָתִי: (יב) לֵכֵן אָמַר הַנְּנִי נִתֵּן לּוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם: (יג) וְהִי־תָהּ לּוֹ וּלְזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו בְּרִית כְּהֵנָּה עוֹלָם תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לְאַלְהֵיו וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**19) On Repentance, R. Soloveitchik**

The Kabbalists (and the psychologists agree with them) say that two forces repose in the soul of man, constructive and destructive forces. Love is a constructive force. Standing opposed to it, jealousy and hatred are destructive forces. The Torah enjoins us to nurture and develop the constructive spiritual forces within us: “Love thy neighbor as thyself”, etc. The positive forces are by and large static and passive in nature, while the negative forces are dynamic and aggressive. A man who has sinned and has repented may be able- if he proves worthy- to utilize the dynamism of the forces of evil which had enveloped him before and elevate them and make them operate on behalf of the forces of good. The very same hunger and zest which drove him to do evil and sin, can be utilized to do good and observe the precepts. The very same eagerness and dedication with which he invested his labors in order to make money illicitly, he can now invest in the labor of charity and in doing deeds of lovingkindness... He has the capacity to sanctify these forces and to direct them upwards.

**20) The Lonely Man of Faith, R. Soloveitchik**

There is no doubt that the term “image of God” in the first account of creation refers to man’s inner charismatic endowment as a creative being. Man’s likeness to God expresses itself in man’s striving and ability to become a creator. Adam the first who was fashioned in the image of God, was blessed with great drive for creative activity and immeasurable resources for the realization of this goal, the most outstanding of which is the intelligence, the human mind, capable of confronting the outside world and inquiring into its complex workings... Hence, Adam the first is aggressive, bold and victory-minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker (*imitatio Dei*).

**21) Majesty and Humility, R. Soloveitchik**

The ethics of humility is no less grounded in *imitatio Dei* than the ethics of majesty. It, too, constitutes the imitation of the Creator, because according to the Lurianic doctrine of *tzimtzum*, God, as it were, contracted Himself and retreated in order to make possible the existence of a finite world.