

THE CHILDREN OF PARENTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And G-d said, let us let us make Adam in our own form and image..." [1:26] "And Adam lived for 130 years, and he had a son in his image, like his form, and he gave him the name Shes [Seth]." [5:4]

There is an obvious parallel between the two verses, the idea that the "form and image" that was given to Adam was passed on to *Shes*. As the *Ramban* [Nachmanides] points out, "It is known that all descendents of living beings are in the image and form of their parents, but because Adam was uplifted in [G-d's] image... the verse explains here that even his descendents were likewise."

We must then ask why this is mentioned only concerning *Shes*, and not his older brothers *Kayin* and *Hevel* [Cain and Abel, of course]. The *Ramban* merely says that it is most relevant concerning *Shes*, because only his descendents survived the flood of *Noach* - thus indicating that we too share this image.

The *Ohr HaChaim*, however, a much later commentator and a Chassidic scholar, mentions an alternative explanation as well - that *Shes* was much further removed from the transgression of Adam and *Chava* in the garden of Eden. Thus he was born from parents who had time to cleanse themselves.

How do we reconcile these two apparently contradictory explanations? Is the Image of G-d granted to everyone, or only to those who are born holy and removed from transgression?

I would like to offer the following: we know that a person can make immoral choices that distance him or her from G-d. And as we "start off" with what our parents have given us and trained us to do, we all are distanced to a greater or lesser extent... because no one is totally free of transgression (yes, even our mothers!).

What does the verse tell us? That distancing ourselves from G-d clouds the image! While all of Adam's children possessed it, it was most apparent in *Shes*, who was born and raised removed from sin. That is my attempt to resolve the contradiction.

And we can take this point still further, because Adam himself was first created in G-d's image. Having that image - and showing it - is our natural state of being! Not only sexual immorality

involves "unnatural acts" - thievery, murder, or any type of transgression is unnatural!

A holy person doesn't go to sleep with guilt over his terrible deeds, he or she takes no notice of slights or insults... is it any wonder that his or her face should shine with a childlike radiance, reflecting [sic] a happy and innocent soul? Well, you can have it too - it's inside you now.

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The author is the Director of Project Genesis.