

From the Rabbi's Desk  
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## Mishnah with a Twist [11]

### It is a Sign of Even Greater Love... Insights into Mishnah Avot 3:14



#### Background to Our Story

##### Genesis 9: 6

<sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

##### Deuteronomy 14:1-2

<sup>1</sup>You are the children of the Lord your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, <sup>2</sup>for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

##### Proverbs 4:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. <sup>2</sup> For I give you good instruction; forsake not my teaching

#### The Text: Mishnah Avot 3:14

הוא הִיה אומר, חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם, שנאמר (בראשית ט) פי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.

חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנקראו בנים למקום, שנאמר (דברים יד) בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם.

חביבין ישראל שנתן להם פלי חמדה. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנתן להם פלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם, שנאמר (משלי ד) פי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, תורתִי אל תעזבו:

He [Rabbi Akiva] used to say: Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God]. It is a sign of even greater love that it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of God], as it is said: "for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).

Beloved are Israel in that they were called children to the All-Present. It is a sign of even greater love that it was made known to them that they are called children of the All-Present, as it is said: "you are children to the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1).

Beloved are Israel in that a precious vessel/instrument (gift) was given to them. It is a sign of even greater love that it was made known to them that a precious vessel/ instrument, with which the world had been created, was given to them, as it is said: "for I give you good instruction; forsake not my teaching" (Proverbs 4:2).



**Explaining the Mishnah** - What is going on here?

### **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Why would it still be valuable to have been created in the image of God, even if we didn't know it? (Please elaborate)

**?** Why would it still be valuable to be children of the All-Present, even if we didn't know it? (Please elaborate)

**?** Why would it still be valuable to have been given a precious instrument, even if we didn't know its value or how special the gift was? (Please elaborate)

**?** What is the precious instrument/vessel with which the world has been created?

All of the acts of creation - about which it is stated, "And God saw that it was good" - were only created for the sake of the Torah, which is called a lesson, as you say (Deuteronomy 32:2), "My lesson drops like the rain." - Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro (c. 1445 - c. 1515), known as "The Bartenura."

**?** What is the extra benefit of knowing that we (all human beings) were created in the image of God?

**?** What is the extra benefit of knowing that we (the Jews) are children of the All-Present?

**?** What is the extra benefit of knowing that we (the Jews) were given a gift so special (the Torah), that was used to create the world?

**"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from This Text.**

! Being ----- (fill the blank – see below) is important. Knowing it takes it to a whole new level!

- Loved
- Good at something in particular,
- Special,
- Capable,
- Blessed,
- Gifted,
- Fortunate,
- Charming,
- And the list goes on...



Rabbi Akiva teaches us that being loved is valuable, and desirable (and certainly much better than the opposite). However, having the awareness of being loved takes your gift to a whole new level.

How wonderful is waking up in the morning and going through life with the awareness that we were created in God's image, that we are specially loved, and that we inherited a special gift!

Telling and showing others (our children, our congregants, our students) how loved/ good at something in particular/ special/ capable/ blessed/ gifted/ fortunate/ they are and making them aware of their gifts can make a real difference in their lives.