



AVINU MALKEINU: WHO IS DOING GOD'S PR?

Yom Kippur 5786 | Rabbi Dr Elliott Karstadt

Gloria Origgi, *Reputation: What it is and why it matters* (2015)

All of us have two egos, two selves. These parallel and distinguishable identities make up who we are and profoundly affect how we behave. One is our subjectivity, consisting of our proprioceptive experiences, the physical sensations registered in our body. The other is our *reputation*, a reflection of ourselves that constitutes our social identity and makes *how we see ourselves seen* integral to our self-awareness. At the beginning of the twentieth century, American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley called this second ego *the looking-glass self*. This second ego is woven over time from multiple strands, incorporating how we think the people around us perceive and judge us. In fact, our understanding of this second self is not created simply by *reflection* but by *refraction* of our image that is warped, amplified, redacted, and multiplied in the eyes of others. This social self controls our lives to a surprising extent and can even drive us to commit extreme acts. It does not really belong to us but is rather the part of us that lives in and through others. Yet the feelings that it provokes – shame, embarrassment, self-esteem, guilt, pride – are both very real and deeply rooted in our emotional experience. Biology demonstrates that our body responds to shame as if it were a physical wound, releasing chemical substances that provoke inflammation and a rise in the level of cortisol. A slap in the face does more harm to our self-esteem than to our stinging and reddened cheek.

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 99b-100a

אפיקורוס. רב ורבי חנינא אמרי תרוייהו: זה המבזה תלמיד חכם. רבי יוחנן ורבי יהושע בן לוי אמרי: זה המבזה חברו בפני תלמיד חכם.

Apikoros. Rav and Rabbi Chanina both said, 'This one who denigrates a Torah scholar.' Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, 'This is one who denigrates his fellow* in front of a Torah scholar.'

Avinu Malkeinu

Avinu Malkeinu, deal with us for the sake of your name.

Avinu Malkeinu, do it for your sake, not for our sake.

אֲבִינוּ מֶלֶכְנוּ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ:

אֲבִינוּ מֶלֶכְנוּ עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַנְךָ אִם לֹא לְמַעַנֵּנוּ:

From the *Machzor*

In Your hands is the soul of every living creature, the spirit of every human being. The soul is Yours and the body is Your creation; have pity on Your work. The soul is Yours and the body is Yours; forgive us for the sake of Your name, for You are known as a God of love and mercy.

כִּי בְיָדְךָ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חַי וְרוּחַ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר־אִישׁ:
הַנִּשְׁמָה לְךָ וְהַגּוֹף פְּעֻלָּתְךָ. חוֹסֶה עַל עַמְלָתְךָ:
הַנִּשְׁמָה לְךָ וְהַגּוֹף שְׁלָתְךָ: יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן
שְׁמֶךָ. כִּי אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן שְׁמֶךָ:

Exodus 32:9-14 (with the JPS Translation)

⁹ The Eternal further said to Moses, "I see that this is a stiffnecked people. ¹⁰ Now, let Me be, that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation." ¹¹ But Moses implored the Eternal his God, saying, "Let not Your anger, Eternal, blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. ¹² Let not the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.' Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people.

¹³ Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever." ¹⁴ And the Eternal renounced the punishment planned for God's people.

ט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם־קָשֶׁה־עֲרָף הוּא: י וְעַתָּה הַנִּיחָה לִּי וְיִחַר־אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלָם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל: יא וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־פָּנָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְמָה יְהוָה יִחַר־הָאֵף בְּעַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּכַח גָּדוֹל וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה: יב לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר בְּרָעָה הוֹצִיאָם לְהָרֹג אֹתָם בְּהָרִים וּלְכַלֹּתָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אַפֶּיךָ וְהִנָּחָם עַל־הָרָעָה לַעֲמֹךָ: יג זָכַר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ וּתְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֲרָבָה אֶת־זֶרְעֶכֶם כְּכוכְבֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲתֵן לְזֶרְעֶכֶם וְנִחַלְוּ לָעֹלָם: יד וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוָה עַל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לַעֲמֹךָ: