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the law, the teacher - genesis 9v6

let us delve deeply into the physical, spiritual, and hidden dimensions of genesis 9:6, drawing from the well of the tanakh. this verse is the capstone of the "noachide" laws regarding bloodshed, providing the rationale and the prescribed consequence. it is a foundational pillar of divine justice in the earth.

the verse states: *"whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of elohiym he made man."*

this command establishes the principle of proportionate justice, not as an act of savage vengeance, but as a sacred duty to uphold the divine order by honouring the **tzelem elohiym (image of elohiym)** in which humanity was created.

the physical meaning: the ordinance of capital justice

on a physical, literal level, this verse establishes the divine sanction for capital punishment for the crime of murder, delegating its execution to human society.

1. "whoever sheds the blood of man...": this is a universal statute, applying to all humanity. the act of murder; the unlawful, intentional shedding of human blood; is identified as the capital crime. this is not about accidental killing or war, but the premeditated destruction of a nephesh (life force).
2. "...by man shall his blood be shed": this is the **lex talionis (law of retaliation)** in its most severe form. the punishment is directly proportionate to the crime. the one who violates the sanctity of life by shedding blood forfeits the sanctity of his own. crucially, the execution is delegated "by man." this is not a call for personal vendetta but for a communal, judicial process. it establishes human government as the divinely ordained instrument to carry out this ultimate judgement, preventing the chaos of endless blood feuds.
3. "for in the image of elohiym he made man": this is the foundational reason. the value of human life is not based on utility, intellect, or virtue, but on ontology. every human being bears the indelible imprint of the creator. to murder a person is to desecrate the image of elohiym itself. the severity of the punishment reflects the severity of the offence against the divine.

in essence, the physical meaning establishes a civil ordinance: to protect the divine image in humanity, the community must act to remove one who would deliberately destroy it. the life of the murderer is taken not out of hatred, but out of a sober reverence for the life he took.

the spiritual meaning: the consciousness of the tzelem (image of) elohiym

spiritually, this command is meant to cultivate a consciousness that sees the divine image in every person and understands the cosmic weight of destroying it.

1. **seeing the image in the other:** the spiritual work is to internalize that every single human being; friend or foe, righteous or wicked; is a bearer of the **tzelem (image of) elohiym**. this is

the ultimate ground for human dignity and the basis for the commandment to love one's neighbour. to fail to see this is the spiritual root of murder, as yahusha highlighted when he connected anger to murder in the heart (mattityahu 5:21-22). the law externally punishes the act, but spiritually, we are called to root out the contempt that devalues another and leads to the act.

2. **the defilement of the land:** in the spiritual cosmology of the tanakh, innocent blood shed upon the land cries out and defiles it (bereshit (gen) 4:10; bemidbar (num) 35:33). the land itself becomes spiritually polluted. the execution of the murderer is not merely punitive; it is an act of ritual cleansing for the land. it is the community restoring spiritual balance by removing the source of the defilement. this teaches that sin has a tangible, spiritual impact on the world around us.
3. **the fear and the reverence:** this law is meant to instill a set-apart fear. the knowledge that the community is obligated to act as elohiym's agent in this matter should give any potential murderer pause. more deeply, it should instill in all of us a profound reverence for the mystery of the divine image in us and in our brother. our lives are not our own to take; they are a sacred trust, and to violate that trust in another is to invoke the most severe consequence.

in summary, the spiritual meaning of genesis 9:6 is the call to a consciousness that venerates the **tzelem (image of) elohiym**. it demands that we see the divine imprint in every face, understand that destroying it pollutes our world, and uphold the community's solemn duty to preserve the sanctity of life through righteous judgement.

the hidden meaning (a tanakh-based view): the shattering and restoration of the image

looking deeper, this verse describes the dynamics of the divine energy in creation. the "**image of elohiym**" is the presence of the **sefirotic structure within humanity (at the end of the study i will add a note of what this is)**; the potential to channel and manifest the divine attributes. murder is the ultimate act of shattering this structure.

1. "whoever sheds the blood of man...": to "shed blood" is to release the dam (blood/life force), which is the nephesh (life). but in the hidden sense, **the nephesh (life) is the vessel for the tzelem (the living soul, the animating life-force, the container tied to the body; is the vessel of the imprint, the divine pattern or template that gives form, direction, and identity)**. the murderer does not just end a biological process; he violently shatters a vessel that was containing and expressing a unique configuration of the divine light. it is an act of anti-creation, a reversal of the divine breath that formed the nephesh chayah (living being).
2. "...by man shall his blood be shed": this is the principle of **tikkun (rectification)** applied at the cosmic level. the shattered vessel must be addressed. the light that was violently released creates a chaotic, damaging imbalance. the execution of the murderer is the painful but necessary act of containing that chaos. the "blood" of the murderer represents his own nephesh (flesh), which has become so corrupted that it actively destroys other divine images. to "shed his blood" is to remove this corrupted, destructive vessel from the system so that it can no longer cause further shattering. it is a surgical removal of a spiritual cancer for the health of the whole.

3. "for in the image of elohiym he made man": the **"image" (tzelem)** is the pattern of the **sefirot (there is a note at the end to explain what this is)**. each human is a microcosm, a miniature representation of the entire tree of life. to kill a person is to assault the divine pattern itself. the "requiring" of genesis 9:5 and the execution of 9:6 are the universe's way of affirming that this pattern is inviolable. the act of justice, though severe, is ultimately a reaffirmation of the value of that pattern. by removing one who would destroy the image, the community declares, "this image is sacred, and we will not tolerate its destruction."

therefore, the hidden meaning of genesis 9:6 is a law of spiritual ecology. the garden of creation is filled with vessels designed to hold the divine light. when one vessel becomes so corrupt that it seeks to shatter other vessels, it must be removed to preserve the integrity of the entire garden. the community, acting through a rigorous process of law, becomes the gardener who, with a heavy heart, uproots the poisonous plant so that the others may live and the divine image may continue to be reflected in the world. this is not about vengeance, but about the severe and sorrowful love required to protect the sacredness of all life.

note: what is the sefirotic structure within humanity?

keter – the will / the inner spark of purpose

hhokmah – the flash of insight

binah – the shaping and understanding of that insight

hhesed – the impulse to give and expand

gevurah – the power to restrain, discern, and set boundaries

tiferet – the heart-centre where compassion and harmony form

neṣaḥ – endurance, drive, and forward motion

hhod – humility, surrender, and truthful alignment

yesod – the inner foundation: integration, identity, and connection

malkhut – expression: words, actions, and the life one creates (your kingdom/kingship)

together, these ten describe the human inner world.

from will... to thought... to emotion... to action.