

If a man shall have committed a sin whose judgment is death, he shall be put to death ...His body shall not remain for the night on the gallows... For a hanging person is a curse of G-d. (21:22,23)

We see from the above *halachah* how exceptional we are to Hashem. For one who has committed a capital offense, the punishment is meted out via stoning. (He committed idolatry or blasphemy.) The corpse is then hung on a gallows, but must be taken down and buried before nightfall, since a human being is created in the image of Hashem. (Indeed, Hashem calls us His children.) Thus, the hanging corpse is an affront to Hashem. *Rashi* likens this to the twin brother of the king who was executed for an act of thievery. An innocent onlooker who passes by might momentarily think that this is the king who is hanging.

When one considers this *halachah*, it is mind-boggling. This is the corpse of one who committed the most egregious of sins. He did not do it surreptitiously, but in plain sight after being warned by two witnesses about the gravity of the offense and the accompanying punishment. Nonetheless, he acted seditiously and ignored every attempt to convince him to desist. Despite all of this, he is still likened to the king's brother. He deserves his punishment, but since he is created in the image of G-d, his hanging corpse is a disgrace to Hashem. This teaches the importance of the *tzelem Elokim*, image of G-d, which applies to every creation – Jew and non-Jew. While the gentile nations do not merit the closeness to Hashem which defines us, they still maintain a *tzelem Elokim*.

Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl, related that when the Mirrer Yeshivah was in Shanghai (during World War II), they saw for the first time men (who were poverty stricken) pulling a rickshaw that people used as transport. The students were shocked to see human beings treated as animals of burden. In time they became accustomed to the unusual sight. One of the premier *talmidim*, *Horav Leib Malin, zl*, who eventually became *Rosh Yeshivah* in Mesivta Torah VoDaas, could not reconcile himself with such demeaning of humanity, so he refused to ride in a rickshaw.