Rabbi Yonah Gross Tehilla Learning Program

Appreciating the Creation of Man - Part II

The Dialectical Narratives of Man

*Unless otherwise noted, all quotations come from Rav Soloveichik’s essay* The Lonely Man of Faith *which appeared in Tradition for the first time in* Summer 1965 (Vol. 7, No. 2)

Page 9 - The purpose of this paper, then, is to define the great dilemma confronting contemporary man of faith. Of course, as I already remarked, by defining the dilemma we do not expect to find its solution, for the dilemma is insoluble. However, the defining itself is a worthwhile cognitive gesture which, I hope, will yield a better understanding of ourselves and our commitment.

Page 11 - 1) In the story of the creation of Adam the first, it is told that the latter was created in the image of God, while nothing is said about how his body was formed. In the ac-count of the creation of Adam the second, it is stated that he was fashioned from the dust of the ground and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

2) Adam the first received the mandate from the Almighty to fill the earth and subdue it, ritr=1-18 ion. Adam the second was charged with the duty to cultivate the garden and to keep it.

3) In the story of Adam the first, both male and female were created concurrently, while Adam the second emerged alone, with Eve appearing subsequently as his helpmate and complement.

4)Finally, and this is a discrepancy of which Biblical criticism has made so much, while in the first account only the name of E-lohim, appears, in the second, E-Iohim is used in conjunction with the Tetragrammaton.

There is no doubt that the term "image of God" in the first account refers to man's inner charismatic endowment as a creative being. Man's likeness to God expresses itself in man's striving and ability to become a creator. Adam the first who was fashioned in the image of God was blessed with great drive for creative activity and immeasurable resources for the realization of this goal, the most outstanding of which is the intelligence, the human mind, capable of confronting the outside world and inquiring into its complex workings…

Modern science has emerged victorious from its encounter with nature because it has sacrificed qualitative-metaphysical speculation for the sake of a functional duplication of reality and substituted the *quantus* for the *quails* question. Therefore, Adam the first is interested in just a single aspect of reality and asks one question only — "How does the cosmos function?" He is not fascinated by the question, "Why does the cosmos function at all?" nor is he interested in the question, "What is its essence?" He is only curious to know how it works. In fact, even this "how"-question with which Adam the first is preoccupied is limited in scope. He is concerned not with the question per se, but with its practical implications. He raises not a metaphysical but a practical, technical "how"-question. To be precise, his question is related not to the genuine functioning of the cosmos in itself but to the possibility of reproducing the dynamics of the cosmos by employing quantified-mathematized media which man evolves through postulation and creative think-ing. The conative movement of attraction which Adam the firstexperiences toward the world is not of an exploratory-cognitive nature. It is rather nurtured by the selfish desire on the part of Adam to better his own position in relation to his environment.

**תהלים פרק ח**

(ו) ותחסרהו מעט מאלהים וכבוד והדר תעטרהו: (ז) תמשילהו במעשי ידיך כל שתה תחת רגליו:

(p. 13) "For thou made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor (dignity)." Man is an honorable being. In other words, man is a dignified being and to be human means to live with dignity. However, this equation of two unknown qualities requires further elaboration. We must be ready to answer the question: what is dignity and how can it be realized? The answer we find again in the words of the Psalmist who ad-dressed himself to this obvious question, and who termed man not only an honorable but also a glorious being, spelling out the essence of glory in unmistakable terms: "Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet." In other words, dignity was equated by the Psalmist with man's capability of dominating his environment and exercising control over it. Man acquires dignity through glory, through his majestic posture vis a vis his environment.

(p. 14) - Dignity of man expressing itself in the awareness of being responsible and of being capable of discharging his responsibility cannot be realized as long as he has not gained mastery over his environment.

(p.24) – When objectified in personal affective-emotional categories, cathartic redemptiveness expresses itself in the feeling of axiological security. The individual intuits his existence as worthwhile, legitimate and adequate, anchored in something stable and unchangeable.

2) Cathartic redemptiveness, in contrast with dignity, cannot be attained through man's acquisition of control of his environment, but through man's exercise of control over himself. A redeemed life is ipso facto a disciplined life. While a dignified existence is attained by majestic man who courageously surges forward and confronts mute nature — a lower form of being — in a mood of defiance, redemption is achieved when humble man makes a movement of recoil, and lets himself be confronted and defeated by a Higher and Truer Being. God summoned Adam the first to advance steadily, Adam the second to retreat.

(p. 49) – The dialectical awareness, the steady oscillating between the majestic natural community and the covenantal faith community renders the act of complete redemption unrealizable. The man of faith, in his continuous movement between the pole of natural majesty and that of covenantal humility, is prevented from totally immersing in the immediate covenantal awareness of the redeeming presence, knowability, and involvement of God in the community of man.

(p. 50) - On the one hand, the Bible commands man "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might," a performance of which only covenantal man is capable since he alone possesses the talent for complete concentration upon and immersion in the focus without being distracted by peripheral interests, anxieties, and problems. On the other hand, the same Bible which just enjoined man to withdraw from the periphery to the center commands him to return to the majestic community which, preoccupied with peripheral interests, anxieties, and problems, builds, plants, harvests, regulates rivers, heals the sick, participates in state affairs, is imaginative in dreaming, bold in planning, daring in undertaking and is out to "conquer" the world.