

BEREISHIS: A STUDY OF TEXT, TRADITION & THEOLOGY

THE CREATION OF ADAM AS UNDERSTOOD BY RABBI SOLOVEITCHIK (2)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed* (p. 4-6)

It is self-evident that for the sake of continuity the Torah, after telling us about the creation of Adam, should have immediately related the story of the creation of Eve. Verse 7 should have been followed by, "And God said: 'It is not good that man be alone . . .'" (v. 18). Then, without diverting from the story of Eve, the Torah should have immediately told us how God made the helper Eve. In other words, verse 18 should have been followed by verse 21 . . . After concluding the story of the creation of man, of his being alone and of the emergence of Eve, the Bible could have told us about the planting of the Paradise in Eden (vs. 8-14), the placing of man there (v. 15), the command to eat from all of the trees except the tree of knowledge (vs. 16-17) and the observation that . . . (v.25). Thus we would have been presented with two complete continuous stories: first the creation of Adam and Eve; second, the planting of the Garden, man's assignment to reside in, cultivate, and watch over it, and the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge. The Torah did not narrate the two stories in the manner we suggested. The Torah apparently tells us one story, with both narratives merged into one . . . Apparently, the story can only be told in this fashion. The planting of paradise, the command, and the naming of the animals are relevant events which cast a light upon and are relevant to the creation of Eve. The Torah had to tell us the story of the creation of woman in installments, advising us about other events that happened which are indispensable for understanding the drama of man.

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In the first chapter of Genesis, the Torah tells us about the creation of male and female. Of course the chapter is concerned mainly not with man but with the cosmos . . . The Torah mentions the creation of man since the latter is a part of the universe and the story of creation would have been imperfect if the Torah had omitted that man was also created . . . The narratives about the creation of plant, animal, and man are almost identical; all three take into account the common origin of life, namely the earth . . . The Bible believes that Adam formed an integral part of nature in the day of his creation . . . The idea of the naturalness of man served as a motivating force in Jewish ethics and metaphysics. Instability, insecurity, life and death, the helplessness and vulnerability of man are popular themes in the prophets . . . Of course, there is a distinctive element in man . . . the *tzelem Elokim*, the image of God . . . Perhaps the central norm in our ethical system is . . . to be like God, reflect His image, become a Divine being, live like a creature who bears resemblance to its maker.

Family Redeemed (p. 8-9)

The break with naturalness and the functional, biological immediacy comes to full expression in the second chapter, which contains the story of man as a unique being in whom the potential called [*tzelem Elokim*] is in the process of realization . . . In the second chapter, we find man . . . [who] sees the environment as something separate and foreign confronting him . . . he strives to attain the distinctiveness of an individual who represents not the species but himself . . . I wish to point out a certain variation in the second chapter which, in my opinion corroborates the premise we have adopted . . . *Elokim* conveys to us the idea of God as the Almighty . . . enormous power, unlimited might and vigor . . . Man's relationship to God as *Elokim* borders on the impossible, for what is man within the vast and uncharted lanes of the cosmos . . . The Psalmist has already raised the question . . . (Psalms 8:4-5). The whole picture changes with the introduction of the name *Hashem*. The latter is symbolic of the special unique relationship between God and man. The name *Hashem* tells us that God communicates with man directly, not via the cosmos. Man relates to God, not as a cosmic being but as an I, as an individual *persona* who has seceded from the unbroken union of cosmic phenomena . . . That is why in the second chapter . . . the name *Hashem* is used . . .

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The question that then arises us: Where is the critical boundary to be found, the line which separates cosmic man from *persona* . . . I believe that the Biblical story has singled out two turning points. . . Man in chapter one . . . does

not reach out for vastness and abundance . . . everything in the universe is limited by boundary. So is natural man. Only by . . . discovering his own identity can man reject boundaries and long for the vastness . . . man-persona wants to accomplish more and more; man-natura is happy with the little he achieves. Judaism approves of fantasy-aroused man-persona. Indeed, God purposely planted the paradise for man . . . Man is encouraged to build, to plant, to beautify his life, to enjoy his life as much as he can . . . But two horrible fears haunt man . . . : the fear of nihility, of nonbeing - death - and the fear of ignorance. . . . And in the middle of the garden grew two mysterious trees representing two basic aspirations of man: to live and to know . . . By planting the garden, God aroused in man-natura these two basic urges . . . The more significant turning point, however is . . . the confrontation with God's moral will, which resulted in the birth of a moral awareness . . . After man had been placed in the Paradise in Eden his fantasy began to aspire to an unlimited existence . . . Adam met suddenly with God's moral will . . . that challenges man to . . . to stop even if the fantasy tells him to move on . . . The final liberation of man from his environment, the transformation from natural into metaphysical man, occurred with this first confrontation with Hashem . . . In a word, the critical boundary is to be detected in verses 16 and 17, in "*Va-yetzav* . . ." Previously we read, "*Va-yomer* . . . (1:28) *Va-yomer* . . . implies an imperative. However this imperative is commensurate with the biological natural push . . . When the verb *va-yetzav* is employed, however, a new area of human existence is opened up - namely that of the non-biological ethical existence.

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The first law of limitation was given to Adam before the emergence of Eve . . . Now after man has been burdened with the ethical . . . only now *Hashem Elokim* decides to create Eve, the woman. Prior to being commanded, man-natura led a non-reflective . . . existence in union with his nature. Hence he did not face the specific human problem by which *homo-persona* is troubled. Of course, we all know what the problem is; the Torah has revealed it. "It is not good that the man be *levaddo*" (2:18). *Levaddo* has a twofold meaning: aloneness and loneliness . . . We understand very well that to be alone and to be lonely are two different problems . . . it is only man-persona - introspective, meditating, and experiencing estrangement from nature - who is lonely . . . Man-natura suffers from aloneness, never from loneliness . . . We know from reading the first chapter that God created male and female . . . There was no need for natural man to meet Eve the woman, since he was already in the company of the female who, for all practical purposes, would have made an excellent wife. However, something happened to man . . . New man was burdened with a new awareness . . . he found himself lonely and forsaken, what he needed was not a practical partnership but an ontological community where his lonely existence could find completeness and legitimacy. The female of the first chapter did not qualify for that type of community. A new woman had to be created who, like man, who changed . . . into a unique spiritual personality.

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What is the main feature of the *persona* of metaphysical man? The Torah gives us the answer in the story about the naming the animals. The story appears to destroy completely the unity and continuity of the tale about the creation of Eve. However the last sentence sheds light upon the link between this story and the emergence of Eve . . . (2:20). The story about Adam giving names to all cattle and fowl revealed to man the distinction between what he was prior to the command and what he became following it. Adam named all of the living creatures. What kind of performance was it, and did God encourage him to do this? It was a cognitive gesture . . . The job of a descriptive scientist is to introduce order into an allegedly chaotic world, to classify and generalize - their question is *what* . . . God wanted Adam to inquire into the what-ness of the world from a descriptive viewpoint . . . When he begins to wonder what nature is and tried to understand it, he abandons the identity and unity of man and his environment and finds himself encountering it as a stranger and outsider. At this point man discovers in himself an incommensurability with nature . . . he views nature not from within but from without . . . While Adam was busy describing a great truth dawned on him . . . Objective observation is the source of our knowledge of the world. However when it comes to man, observation alone will yield a very meager amount of knowledge. Man must confide in the person who is eager to understand him. Without confession there can hardly be an opportunity to learn why, who and what a particular individual is. in order for man to be recognized, he must reveal himself . . . There is no depth to nature. its existence is a flat two-dimensional one . . . However man has an inner world . . . In order to escape loneliness man . . . had to meet woman-mystery. They have a lot in common otherwise Eve could not be a helper. However they are also different; their existential experiences are incommensurate . . . man and woman differ not only physiologically as male and female, of whom the first account of creation tells us, but also spiritually and personality-wise. This is the way in which the Creator has ordained lonely human destiny.