

THE RAV'S RADICAL READING OF THE WORLD'S CREATION

PART 2

1. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, p. 65

The Halakhah was well aware that biologically and physiologically, there is little difference between man and animal. Medical research is based upon the similarity of both concerning all organic pathological phenomena. In the same way, the concept of *terefah*, which denotes any organic anomaly (structural and functional), refers to animal and man alike.

2. Genesis 1:22

God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

2. ספר בראשית פרק א פסוק כב

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וְהָעוֹף יִרְבַּע בָּאָרֶץ:

3. Genesis 1:26–30

²⁶And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." ²⁷And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth." ²⁹God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food." ³⁰And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so.

3. ספר בראשית פרק א פסוקים כו-ל

כִּוְיֹאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְּדֹגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: כִּוְיִבְרָא אֱלֹהִים | אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אוֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם: כִּוְיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִּשְׁתֶּהּ וּרְדּוּ בְּדֹגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת עַל-הָאָרֶץ: כִּוְיֹאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב | זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם, יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה: לְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל | רוֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָה וַיְהִי-כֵן:

4. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, pp. 73–76

Man is good under all three aspects: (1) as a biochemical organism (plant) endowed with all the organic insistentcies and propensities; (2) as an animal with all his automatic, primordial, biological act dynamics (the sexual drive, the appetite); (3) as a man-animal who brought his biological motivation to perfection and converted it to a technical intelligence which guides man in his execution of the biological drive. It is at this point that Judaism breaks with Christianity. Christianity has been bent upon a transcendental adventure, namely, to free man from his bondage to the flesh and raise him to a spiritual level. Judaism, in contrast, proclaimed the goodness of the whole of man, of the natural man-plant-animal.

...

The simple word *va-yomer* (He said) sheds a new light upon man, and upon his role and task. ... The *va-yevarekh* does not constitute any norm or ethical law. But in the case of man, God also spoke to him. He informed him of his biological propensities and tendencies. Through His speech to man, God registered in the latter's mind the necessity of this automatic drive, the transforming it into a conscious, deliberate, anticipated act, directed upon the same objective. The

automatic push and blind, forced movement of *va-yevarekh* turn into a conscious drive and intelligent movement of *va-yomer*. In contrast to animals, man yields to his natural instinct not only because he is driven by biochemical forces to such behaviour but also because he is motivated. Through *va-yomer*, biological mechanical drives and teleological intelligent motifs are interwoven.

...

However, ... Adam is still an animal crawling in the jungle, still the ape which is aware of its needs. Man may have acquired a technical intelligence that makes tools and organizes, but his awareness was utilitarian, technical. He possessed the ability of selecting the media that guaranteed a successful performance by instinct. The specific human element – the moral “agent” – had not yet come to birth. Unique ethical norms were, as yet, impossible.

5. Genesis 2:16–17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.”

5. ספר בראשית פרק ב פסוקים טז-יז

וַיֹּצֵא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגָּן אָכַל תֹּאכֵל: וּמֵעֵץ הַדְּעִית טוֹב וָרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם אָכַלְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

6. Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”

6. ספר בראשית פרק ג פסוק א

וַהֲנִחַשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי-אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן:

7. Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was *tov* for eating and a *ta'avah* to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to behold, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

7. ספר בראשית פרק ג פסוק ו

וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֹאכָל וְכִי תִאֲוָה-הוּא לְעֵינֶיהָ וַתִּחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂכִּיל וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִיָּו וַתֹּאכַל וַתֵּתֶן גַּם-לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּה וַיֹּאכַל:

8. Genesis 3:12–13

The man said, “The woman You put at my side—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done!” The woman replied, “The serpent duped me, and I ate.”

8. ספר בראשית פרק ג פסוקים יב-יג

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִיא נָתְנָה-לִּי מִן-הָעֵץ וָאָכַל: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לָאִשָּׁה מַה-זֶּאת עָשִׂיתְּ וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הִנֵּחַשׁ הַשִּׂיָּאֲנִי וָאָכַל:

9. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, p. 123

It is typical of the original sin that the moment of seduction was introduced into the story of the Tree of Knowledge. Man did not sin because he chose to violate the divine injunction. Adam was seduced by Eve, and she in turn was seduced by the serpent. The human tragedy did not originate by free choice but by a hypnotic force – the esthetic experience with all its compelling power. The first sin was perpetrated in a mood of esthetic revolt which was not fomented by a free man but suggested to him by the serpent.

10. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, pp. 144–145

Man became selfish, treacherous and unnatural. God condemned man. Creation of man seemed to be an absolute “failure,” *kivyakhol* (as it were). “And the Lord repented that He had made man” (Gen. 6:6). God regretted the creation of man. The orgiastic, esthetic type dominated mankind; *hamas* was the guiding motif of human activities and the demonic superseded the divine personality. The catastrophe by which God punished man – the deluge – did not solve the problem completely. It improved man; yet it did not heal the breach in his personality.

Through devious ways and zigzag channels providence began to realize a new human personality: the charismatic. Abraham was born, chosen and charged with a mission by God. Abraham was selected to rehabilitate man and to reinstate him to the ideal position which he was destined to occupy. *Kivyakhol*, God needed charismatic man to appear on the human stage.