

Are Human's "Above Nature"?

1. Ramban on Bereishit 1:28

וטעם וירדו – שימשלו בחזקה בדגים ובעוף ובבהמה ובכל הרמש, והבהמה תכלול החיה. ואמר ובכל הארץ – שימשלו בארץ עצמה, לעקור ולנתוץ ולהפור ולהצוב נחשת וברזל. ולשון רדיה – ממשלת האדון בעבדו.

That they will rule by force over the fish, birds, animals, and all insects. Animals included wild animals. It says "And all the land" meaning that they will rule of the land itself, [including their ability] to uproot, and shatter and dig and carve copper and iron. "רדיה" means the dominance of the master over his servant.

2. Don Isaac Abravanel Bereishit Chapter 1

ולכן כדי לזרוזו בראו ביום א' עם שאר הב"ה יושבים אצלם ורוחם בפחיתות וכליונם ושלא יחשוב גרועים הם ממנו בטבעיהם כי כמות זה כן מות זה ורוח אחד חיוני להם ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין בענין הגוף כי הכל הבל אבל ההבדל ביניהם מצד השכל השכלים אשר בו ולכן יתחזק להתרחק מדרכיהם החמריים ולהדבק בשכלו כי בזה יקנה שם ואחרית לנפשו ואם לא יעשה כן יהיה סופו כבהמה וכחיה כמו שהיתה התחלת כלם יחד ביום א'

Therefore, in order to warn him, He created him on one day with the rest of the beasts sitting with them and their spirit in inferiority and extinction and so he should not think they are worse than him in their nature because they will both die and share one living spirit. **And man's advantage over the beast isn't in his body for all is fleeting. Rather the distinction between them lies in his intellect.** Therefore he will be strengthened to move away from their material ways and cling to his mind because through this he will acquire a name and an end for his soul and if he does not do so his end will be like a beast and an animal as they all began together in one day.

A Second Tale of Creation

3. Bereishit 2:4-17

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ, בהבראם: ביום, עשות ה' אלקים--ארץ ושמים. ה. וכל שיש השדה, טרם יהיה בארץ, וכל עשב השדה, טרם יצמח: כי לא המטיר ה' אלקים, על-הארץ, ואדם אין, לעבד את-האדמה. ו. ואד, יצלה מן-הארץ, והשקה, את-כל-פני האדמה. ז. ויניצר ה' אלקים את-האדם, עפר מן-האדמה, ויפח באפיו, נשמת חיים; ויהי האדם, לנפש חיה. ח. וישע ה' אלקים, גן-בעדן--מקדם; וישם שם, את-האדם אשר יצר. ט. ויצמח ה' אלקים, מן-האדמה, פל-עץ נחמד למראה, וטוב למאכל--ועץ החיים, בתוך הגן, ועץ הדעת טוב ורע. ... טו. וישקה ה' אלקים, את-האדם; וינחםו בגן-עדן, לעבדה ולשמרה. טז. ויצו ה' אלקים, על-האדם לאמר מפל עץ-הגן, אכל תאכל. יז. ומעץ, הדעת טוב ורע--לא תאכל, ממנו: כי, ביום אכלה ממנו--מות תמות.

Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When the LORD G-d made earth and heaven—when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD G-d had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth—the LORD G-d formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. The LORD G-d planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. And from the ground the LORD G-d caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad. A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches... The LORD G-d took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. And the LORD G-d 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."

4. Rabbi Joseph B. Soleveichik, "Confrontation" from Tradition 1964, Volume 6

"And every plant of the field was not yet in the earth and every herb of the field had not yet grown, . . . and there was no man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

And the Lord G-d formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:5-7)

Man who was created out of the dust of the ground, enveloped in a mist rising from the jungle, determined by biological immediacy and mechanical necessity, knows of no responsibility, no opposition, no fear, and no dichotomy, and hence he is free from carrying the load of humanity.

In a word, this man is a non-confronted being. He is neither conscious of his assignment vis-a-vis something which is outside of himself nor is he aware of his existential otherness as a being summoned by his Maker to rise to tragic greatness...

And the Lord G-d planted a garden eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord G-d caused to grow every tree that is desirable to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:8-9)

Man depicted in these verses is hedonically-minded and pleasure-seeking, having at his disposal a multitude of possibilities of sense-gratification. Before him stretches a vast garden with an almost endless variety of trees desirable and good, tempting, fascinating, and exciting the boundless fantasy with their glamorous colors....

"And the Lord G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it."

This sentence in Genesis 2:15 is almost a verbatim repetition of Genesis 2:8, yet the accounts differ in two respects. First, in the second account, the Bible uses a verb denoting action preceding the placing of man in the Garden of Eden - "And G-d *took* the man and placed him" - whereas in the previous account, the verb "he placed", is not accompanied by any preliminary action on the part of the Almighty. The expression "And He took" does not occur in the first account. Second, there is no mention in the previous account of any assignment given to man while this account does specify that man was charged with the task of cultivating and keeping the garden.

The reason for these variations lies in the fact that the two accounts are related to two different men. The first story, as we have previously indicated, is of non-confronted man carried by the mighty tide of a uniform, simple, non-reflective life, who was placed in the Garden of Eden for one purpose only - to pursue pleasure, to enjoy the fruit of the trees without toil, to live in ignorance of his human destiny, to encounter no problem and to be concerned with no obligation. As we stated previously, non-confronted man is a non-normative being. The second story is of confronted man who began to appraise critically his position vis-à-vis his environment and found his existential experience too complex to be equated with the simplicity and non-directedness of the natural life-stream. This man, as a subject-knower facing an almost impenetrable objective order, was dislocated by G-d from his position of naturalness and harmonious being and placed in a new existential realm, that of confronted existence. Confronted man is a displaced person. Having been taken out of a state of complacency and optimistic naiveté, he finds the intimate relationship between him and the order of facticity ending in tension and conflict. The verb "And he took" signifies that G-d removed man from one dimension and thrust him into another - that of confronted existence. At this phase, man, estranged from nature, fully aware of his grand and tragic destiny, became the recipient of the first norm. "And the Lord G-d commanded the man." The divine imperative burst forth out of infinity and overpowered finite man.

Was Everything Created For Mankind? What about Aliens?

5. Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (10th century Babylon), Emunot V'Deot Essay 4

אמר יהודה בן שאול. אמר המהבר אני פותח למאמר הזה הקדמה, שאומר שאף על פי שראינו הברואים רבים, אין ראוי שנהיה נבוכים במכוון מהם, רצוני לומר מי הוא. כי הנה שער טבעי יתבאר לנו בו מי הוא המכוון בכל הברואים, וכאשר נחקור בשער ההוא נמצא המכוון הוא האדם, והוא כי המנהג והבניה משימים כל דבר נכבד באמצע הדברים אשר אינם נכבדים כמוהו, ונתחיל מהקטן שבדברים ונאמר כי הגרגיר ממוצע בתוך כל העלין, והוא שהגרגיר יותר נכבד מהם, כי צמח הצמח ותכונתו ממנו, וכן מה שצומחים ממנו האילנות, אם יהיה הוא המאכל יהיה בתוך הפרי כמו השקד... וראיתי הארץ באמצע השמים והגלגלים סובבים אותה מכל צדדיה, התקיים אצלנו כי המכוון בבריאה הוא בארץ, ואח"כ הסתכלנו בכל חלקיה, וראינו העפר והמים שניהם דומם, ומצאנו הבהמות בלתי מדברים ולא נשאר כי אם האדם,

והתברר לנו כי הוא הענין המכוון בלי ספק, ודרשנו הספרים ומצאנו בהם מאמר הבורא, אנכי עשיתי ארץ ואדם עליה בראתי (ישעיה מה). אבל מתחלה התורה ספר כל הברואים, וכאשר השלימם אמר עתה, נעשה אדם (בראשית א). כמי שבונה ארמון ומציעו ומתקנו ואח"כ מביא אליו בעליו.

I open with an introduction to this essay, which says that although we have seen many creatures, we should not be confused by their what is intended from them, I mean to say who he is. For the gate of nature make clears to us who is the end of all creatures, and when we explore that gate the end is man, and that is that custom and construction to put everything honorable in the middle of things that are not as honorable, and we will start with the smallest thing and say that the seed is in the center within the leaves because it is more respectable than them, for the plant and its features emanate from it. Also regarding what grow from trees, if it is the food it will be in the middle like the almond...and I saw the earth in the middle of the sky and the planets revolving around it on all sides, it shows us that the end of creation is in the Earth, and then we looked at all its parts, and we saw the dust, and water which are both silent, and we found the animals which don't speak **and humans remain. And it became clear to us that he is the deliberate end without a doubt**, and we searched the books and found in them the statement of the Creator, "I made land and man on it I created (Isaiah 45). But first the Torah tells of all creation , and when it finishes them it says "**Let us make Man" (Bereishit 1) as one who builds a palace and furnishes it and fixes it and then brings to it its owner.**

6. Rambam, Introduction to the Mishna

כל הנמצאים מתחת גלגל הירח אמנם הומצאו בשביל האדם בלבד

All that exists under the sphere of the moon, was only brought into existence for mankind

7. Rambam, Guide for the Perplexed 3:13

I consider therefore the following opinion as most correct according to the teaching of the Bible, and best in accordance with the results of philosophy; namely, that the Universe does not exist for man's sake, but that each being exists for its own sake, and not because of some other thing. Thus we believe in the Creation, and yet need not inquire what purpose is served by each species of the existing things, because we assume that G-d created all parts of the Universe by His will; some for their own sake, and some for the sake of other beings, that include their own purpose in themselves. In the same manner as it was the will of G-d that man should exist, so it was His will that the heavens with their stars should exist, that there should be angels, and each of these beings is itself the purpose of its own existence.

8. Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman, Introduction to Bereishit

ועוד מדגישה התורה, כי כל אשר ברא אלקים – טוב הוא, כלומר שיש בו כל הדרוש לקיום עצמי, עתה ובעתיד; ולאחר שנברא האדם, רואה אלקים כי טוב מאד הוא, כלומר לא רק מוכשר לקיים את עצמו כי אם גם ראוי לקדם את יעודו ואת תכליתו שלו, של האדם. מכאן נמצינו למדים, כי כל הברואים – תכלית כפולה להם, תכלית עצמית מחד, ומאידך – לשמש את האדם.

And the Torah further emphasizes that everything that G-d has created is good, that is, that it has everything necessary for self-existence, now and in the future; And after man was created, G-d sees that he is very good, that is, not only capable of sustaining himself but also worthy of advancing his destiny and the purpose, of man. From this we learn that all creatures have a dual purpose, a self-purpose on the one hand, and on the other - to serve man.

9. Tehillim 5:4-9 (JPS Tanakah 1985)

כִּי־אַרְאֶה שְׁמַיִךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֹתֶיךָ יָרַח וְכוכְבֵימַיִם אֲשֶׁר כִּנְנַנְתָּהּ: מַה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וְכִי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ: וְתִסְפְּרֵנוּ מַעֲשֵׂי מַאֲלָקִים וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֹרְהוּ: תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ כֹּל שִׁתָּה תַחֲת־רַגְלָיו: צִנְיָה וְאַלְפִים כָּלָם וְגַם בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדֵי: צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם לְעֵבֶר אֲרֻחוֹת יָמִים: ה' אֲדַלְּגֵנוּ מִה־אֲדָרִי שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place, what is man that You have been mindful of him, mortal man that You have taken note of him, that You have made him little

less than divine, and adorned him with glory and majesty; You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying the world at his feet, sheep and oxen, all of them, and wild beasts, too; the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever travels the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!

10. Rabbi Norman Lamm, *The Religious Implications of Extraterrestrial Life, Tradition, Winter 1965*

Issue 7.4

Here a consideration of celestial grandeur points to man's insignificance; yet man's central worth is salvaged, and proof is adduced from his superiority over terrestrial creatures. What we are given here is not a hesitation, an uncertainty, but a marvelous paradox. Man is both important and insignificant, central and peripheral, worthy and trivial. In the context of the vast cosmos, man shrinks almost into nothingness; in the framework of his own habitation he is supreme, worthy, terribly important. Both are true...

Man's non-singularity does not imply his insignificance. Metaphysical dignity is not part of a number's gam; there is nothing in logic or philosophy that insists upon it being in inverse proportion to the number of being who participate in it.

Judaism, therefore, can very well accept a scientific finding that man is not the only intelligent and bio-spiritual resident in G-d's world. But Judaism cannot draw the premature and utterly misleading consequences that some have already done. Man's non-singularity does not contain, contrary to Shapley's self-assurance "intimations of man's inconsequentiality. It is not because we "cherish our stuffness", but because we cherish the cosmic meaningfulness of the Creator, impressed into all parts of His vast creation that we affirm our faith that G-d is great enough to be concerned with all His creatures, no matter how varied and how far-flung throughout the remotest galaxies of His majestic universe.

A Torah Responsibility to the Environment

11. Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 529 (Adapted from Sefaria translation)

שלא להשחית אילני מאכל - שנמנענו מלכרת האילנות כשנצור על עיר כדי להצר לאנשי העיר ולהכאיב לבותם, ועל זה נאמר (דברים כ יט) לא תשחית את עצה וגו' ואותו לא תכרת, וכמו כן נכנס תחת זה הלאו, שלא לעשות שום הפסד, כגון לשרף, או לקרע בגד או לשבר כלי לבטלה, ובכל ענינים אלו ובכל כיוצא בהם שיהיה בהם השחתה.

To not destroy fruit trees: That we have been prevented from chopping down trees when we besiege a city to distress the people of the city and to sadden their hearts. And about this is it stated ([Deuteronomy 20:19](#)), "you may not destroy its tree, etc. and you shall not chop it down." And likewise not to do any damage - such as burning or ripping a garment or breaking a vessel for no reason - entered under this negative commandment and in all of these matters and in all that is similar to them which involve destruction).

שרש המצוה ידוע, שהוא כדי ללמד נפשנו לאהב הטוב והתועלת ולהדבק בו, ומתוך כך תדבק בנו הטובה, ונרחיק מכל דבר רע ומכל דבר השחתה, וזהו דרך החסידים ואנשי מעשה אוהבים שלום ושמחים בטוב הבריות ומקרבים אותן לתורה, ולא יאבדו אפילו גרגיר של חרדל בעולם, ויצר עליהם בכל אבדון והשחתה שיראו, ואם יוכלו להציל יצילו כל דבר מהשחית בכל כחם, ולא כן הרשעים אחיהם של מזיקים שמחים בהשחתת עולם, והמה משחיתים את עצמם

The root of this commandment is well-known - it is to teach our souls to love the good and beneficial and to cling to it. And through this, goodness clings to us and we will distance [ourselves] from all bad and destructive things. And this is the way of the pious and people of [proper] action - they love peace and are happy for the good of the creations and bring them close to Torah, and they do not destroy even a grain of mustard in the world. And they are distressed by all loss and destruction that they see; and if they can prevent it, they will prevent any destruction with all of their strength. But not so are the wicked - the brothers of the destructive spirits. They rejoice in the destruction of the world, and they destroy themselves..

12. Rabbi Elchanan Samet, "סיפור הבריאה והמשבר האקולוגי של דורנו"

http://etzion.gush.net/vbm/update_views.php?num=1283&file=vbm/archive/7-parsha/01bereishit.rtf

13. Bereishit 7:21-23

וַיָּגֵעַ כָּל־בְּשָׂרָה ׀ הַרְמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ בְּעוֹף וּבְבֵהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־הָאָדָם׃ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמַת־רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאַפָּיו מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ מָתוּ׃ נִלְמַח אֶת־כָּל־הַיְקוּיִם ׀ אֲשֶׁר ׀ עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בֵּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּמָּחוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשָּׂאֵר אֲדָמָה וְאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה׃

And all flesh that stirred on earth perished—birds, cattle, beasts, and all the things that swarmed upon the earth, and all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the merest breath of life, all that was on dry land, died. All existence on earth was blotted out—man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

14. Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אדם הראשון, נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו: ראה מעשיי, כמה נאים ומשובחין הן, וכל מה שבראתי, בשבילך בראתי. תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי, שאם קלקלת, אין מי שיתקן אחריך.

When the Blessed One created the first man, He took him lead him near all the trees of Gan Eden and said to him: See my deeds, how beautiful and fine they are, and all that **I have created, for you I have created. Make sure you do not spoil and destroy My world, that if you spoil, there is no one to fix after you.**