

BEREISHIS: A STUDY OF TEXT, TRADITION & THEOLOGY

THE CREATION OF ADAM AS UNDERSTOOD BY RABBI SOLOVEITCHIK (1)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (p. 9-10)

We all know that the Bible offers two accounts of the creation of man. We are also aware of the theory suggested by the Bible critics attributing these two accounts to two different traditions and sources. Of course, since we do unreservedly accept the unity and integrity of the Scriptures and their divine character, we reject this hypothesis . . . It is, of course, true that the two accounts of the creation of man differ considerably . . . However, the answer lies not in an alleged dual tradition but in dual man, not in an imaginary contradiction between two versions but in a real contradiction in the nature of man. The two accounts deal with two Adams, two men, two fathers of mankind, two types, two representatives of humanity, and it is no wonder that they are not identical.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 12-13)

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 . . . 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?” . . . In fact, even this “how” question . . . is concerned not with this question *per se*, but with its practical implications . . . To be precise, his question is related . . . to the possibility of reproducing the dynamics of the cosmos . . . It is nurtured by the selfish desire on the part of Adam to better his own position in relation to the environment . . . he is completely utilitarian as far as motivation, teleology, design, and methodology are concerned.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 16-19)

Human existence is a dignified one because it is a glorious, majestic, powerful existence . . . Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques, and saves lives is blessed with dignity . . . Civilized man has gained limited control of nature and has become, in certain respects, her master, and with his mastery has attained dignity as well . . . Hence, Adam the first is aggressive, bold and victory-minded . . . He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker (*imitatio Dei*) . . . In doing all of this, Adam the first is trying to carry out the mandate, entrusted to him by his Maker who, at dawn of the sixth mysterious day of creation addressed Himself to man and summoned him to “fill the earth and subdue it.”

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 21)

Adam the second is, like Adam the first, also intrigued by the cosmos . . . However while the cosmos provokes Adam the first to quest for power and control, thus making him ask the functional “how” question, Adam the second responds to the call of the cosmos by engaging in a different kind of cognitive gesture . . . Instead his inquiry is of a metaphysical nature . . . He wonders: “Why did the world in its totality come into existence . . . What is the purpose of all of this . . . Who is He whose life-giving and life-warming breath Adam feels constantly and who at the same time remains distant and remote from all? . . . In a word, Adam the second explores not the scientific abstract universe but the irresistibly fascinating qualitative world where He establishes an intimate relation with God. The Biblical metaphor referring to God breathing life into Adam refers to the actual preoccupation of the latter with God, or his genuine living experience of God rather than to some divine potential or endowment in Adam symbolized by *imago Dei*.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 25-27)

While Adam the first wants to reclaim himself from a closed-in, non-reflective, natural existence by setting himself up as a majestic being capable of ruling his environment, Adam the second sees his *separateness* from nature and his existential uniqueness not in dignity of majesty but in something else. There is, in his opinion, another mode of existence through which man can find his own self, namely the redemptive, which is not necessarily identical with

the dignified . . . An atheist cosmonaut circling the earth, advising his superiors who placed him in orbit, that he did not encounter any angels, may lay claim to dignity because he courageously mastered space; he is, however, very far from experiencing a redeemed existence . . . dignity is not measured by the inner worth of the in-depth personality, but by the accomplishments of the surface personality . . . dignity can find realization only in the outward gesture which helps the inner personality to objectify itself and to explain and interpret itself to the external world . . . there is no dignity in anonymity . . . therefore Adam the first was not created alone, but together with Eve - male and female emerged simultaneously. Adam the first exists in society, in community with others.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 30-31)

The whole theory of the social contract, brought to perfection by the philosophers of the Age of Reason, reflects the thinking of Adam the first . . . according to the Biblical story, God was not concerned with the loneliness of **לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ** Adam the first. Neither was Adam aware of the pronouncement, "It is not good for man to be lonely" . . . The natural community of Adam the first enhances man's chances for successful survival, yet does not elevate his existential experience, since the latter is in no need for redemption or catharsis . . . male and female were summoned by their creator to act in unison in order to act successfully. Yet they are not charged with the task of existing in unison in order to cleanse, redeem, or hallow their existence.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 35-6)

Cathartic redemptiveness, in contrast to dignity, cannot be attained through man's exercise of control over his environment, but through man's control over himself. A redeemed life is *ipso facto* a disciplined life . . . God summoned Adam the first to advance steadily, Adam the second to retreat. Adam the first he told to exercise mastery and to "fill the earth and subdue it," Adam the second, to serve. He was paced in the Garden of Eden "to cultivate and keep it." Dignity is acquired by man whenever he triumphs over nature. Man finds redemption whenever he is overpowered by the Creator of nature . . . The Bible has stated explicitly that Adam the second was formed from the dust of the ground because the knowledge of the humble origin of man is an integral part of Adam's "I" experience. Adam the second has never forgotten that he is just a handful of dust.

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 39-40)

Adam the first was not called to sacrifice in order that his female companion come into being, while it is indispensable for Adam the second to give away part of himself in order to find a companion. The community-fashioning gesture of Adam the first is . . . purely utilitarian and egotistic and, as such, rules out sacrificial action. For Adam the second, communicating and communing are redemptive and sacrificial gestures . . . The covenantal faith community, in contradistinction to the natural work community, interprets the divine pronouncement **לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ** "It is not good for man to be lonely" (not alone) , not in utilitarian but in ontological terms . . .

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 43-44)

The first is a community of interests, forged by the indomitable desire for success and triumph and consisting at all times of two grammatical *personae*, the "I" and the "thou" who collaborate in order to further their interests . . . the second is a community of commitments born in distress and defeat and comprises three participants: "I, thou, and He," the He in whom all being is rooted and in whom everything finds its rehabilitation, and consequently, redemption. Adam the first met the female all by himself while Adam the second is introduced to Eve by God, who summoned Adam to join Eve in an existential community . . .

The Lonely Man of Faith (p. 50-51)

Majestic man . . . is gratified by his encounter with God within the framework of the cosmic drama. Since the majestic man is incapable of breaking out of the cosmic cycle, he cannot interpret his transcendental adventure in anything but cosmic categories. Therefore the divine name of E-Lohim, which denotes God being the source of the cosmic dynamics, sufficed to characterize the relationship prevailing between majestic man and his Creator addressing Himself to him through cosmic occurrence. However, covenantal man of faith, craving for a personal and intimate relationship with God, could not find it in the cosmic E-Lohim encounter and had to shift his transcendental experience to different level at which the finite "I" meets the infinite He "face-to-face." This strange communal relation between man and God is symbolized by the Tetragrammaton, which therefore occurs in the Biblical account of Adam the second.