

ADAM: Created in the Image and Likeness of God

The story of the creation of Adam, the first man and Eve the first woman is told with two different versions.

In the first version: (1)

'Let us make a human [adam] in our image [b'tzalmo], by our likeness [kid'mu'tanu] , to subdue (2) the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and the cattle and the wild beasts and all the crawling things that crawl upon the Earth. And God created the human [adam] in his image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them' (Gen. 1:26-27).

In the second version:

'The Lord God fashioned the human, earth from the soil, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living creature' (2:7). 'And the Lord God said 'it is not good for the human to be alone, I shall make him a help mate 'ezer ke'negdo' (3) (2:18). 'The human named all the animals and all the fowls (2:20). 'God took one of his ribs and closed over the flesh where it had been, and the Lord built the rib He had taken from the human into a woman and He brought her to the human' (2:22). 'And the human said this one shall be called woman for from man was this one taken' (2:23). 'And the human called his woman's name Eve, for she was the mother of all that lives (3:20).

In the first version God makes Adam male and female; he/she is the primordial one (Adam kadmon in Kabbalistic literature) and made in God's image and likeness as both male and female; they would appear to equal in all ways. In the second version Eve comes from Adam's rib, he names her as he had previously named all the animals and after the 'fall' her function is defined as mother, and she will ruled by her 'man' (3:17) she is not longer equal.

The first version seems to take place in Heaven. God seems to ask the question 'shall we make humankind in our image'? In terms of 'we' the Midrash asks whom was God consulting with? Several answers have been presented: He addressed the creation (RaDaK and Maimonides), the heavenly Court (angels) , Himself or it refers to the plurality of His majesty (Gen. Rabbah 8:3,5). In the second version all takes place on earth; Adam, the first human comes from 'afar' dust or soil – humus (4), from the 'adama' the earth.

IMAGE

Who or what is meant by 'our image'? In what respect is man is like God? Various answers have been proposed.

(1) The image is the spiritual quality of man: his self-consciousness and self-determination, his reason and understanding, his capability for thought and his desire for immortality. For Maimonides this is human intellect which resembles divine intellect and allows humans to commune with God. (5)

(2) The image is the term for the immediate relationship between God and man. According to Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'in a very deep and strong sense God cannot be conceived by us in complete detachment from man. God and man have to be thought of together. A prophet is a man who holds God and man in one thought and at one time. He does not think of God without man and he does not think of man without God.' (6) Heschel believed that biblical, rabbinic, and kabbalistic thought converge on the idea of the interdependency of the divine and the human. Perhaps the image can be seen as the access, the conduit to God.

As noted above when discussing the plural in the creation of the human Jewish midrashim state it refers to the heavenly angels. God can appear in the guise of an angel and angels can appear as an image of God; as divine agents. In Mamre 'the Lord appeared' as three men come and speak to Abraham; one of them tells him that I [God] will return and Sarah shall have a son; she laughs and then '*the Lord*' speaks directly to Abraham' (18:1-16). Jacob fights a man all night, the man renames him 'Israel', and the man turns out to be Elohim (32:29-32). In Exodus an angel whom the people are to heed has God's name within him (Ex. 23:20-21). The line between angels and the divine seem almost intentionally made ambiguous.

These angels, in the Pentateuch, appear on earth; in the various books of the prophets we find angels with wings (Is. 6:1-3) and more bizarre images in Ezekiel (chapters 1 and 10) in heaven.

The aspects of the Books of prophets noted above seem like the Gnostic and theosophic ruminations of the kabbalists. Michael Fishbane refers to midrashim as myths and sees the kabbalists as inheritors of the midrashim. (7) 'They 'imply that this canonical source conceals a deeper dimension about the acts and nature of God, and thus the language of the readable text is but the surface of another narrative about divine deeds or divine feelings hidden from immediate view. To know how to read rightly is thus to know that the historical character of Scripture is but the verbal outcropping of another narrative—not an account of Israel but of God, and not of the events of the earth but of the hidden acts of the Lord in heaven. . . . Scripture suffuses all; for it is the real myth of God, insofar as this is ever or at all sayable in human speech or accessible to the human imagination. God's truth is refracted in fragments of myth bound by the syntax of Scripture'. (8)

Are all these images of God in various forms? Can these angels be seen as some incarnation of the divine? Heaven and earth were not seen as completely separate entities as we in the modern age see them. Emperors and Kings were believed to have a divine lineage. In ancient times Chinese Emperors talked about uniting the powers of heaven and earth.

Divine agents are seen in the Pentateuch and expanded in the Books of Prophets as noted above. Various Jewish texts from the fourth century B.C.E. show a tendency to expand such agents. (9) The Teacher of Righteousness supposedly knew all the mysteries of the prophets; does that make him an agent of the divine? What of the four Holy Watchers named Sariel, Raphael, Gabriel and Michael or the seven adding the names Uriel, Re'uel and Remiel in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of 1 Enoch? (10) Michael is noted in the book of Daniel; he will protect the righteousness of Israel (Dan. 12:1); while Gabriel interprets Daniel's dreams (Dan. 8:16; 9:21-27). Daniel also refers to a heavenly being 'one like a son of man' (Dan. 7:13).

Can Holy Rabbis be seen as agents of the image? What are we to think of the dead Lubavitcher Rebbe still considered by many of his disciples as the messiah. Can Jesus as an agent of the divine be a Jewish concept?

(3) Some have seen the image consisting in man's form, which is similar to God's. According to Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, 'in all rabbinic literature there is not a single statement that categorically denies that God has a body or form'. He continues that 'the creation of man in God's image refers to man's physical [bodily] form'. (11) Rabbi Isaiah of Trani (1180-1250) an Italian scholar in Talmudic studies believed that some of the Talmudic Sages believed in God's corporeality, (12) this despite Maimonide's third Article of Faith and many other commentator's rejection of such a belief.

Does 'tzelem' image imply that God has an image that can be replicated? In Gen. 5:3 we are told that Adam's son Seth has the '*likeness and image*' of his father referring to his physical likeness; can one construe that Adam resembles a similar bodily image of God? Later on the Torah states '*He who sheds human blood by humans his blood shall be shed, for in the image God He made humankind*' (9:6).

At an evacuation in Northern Syria a statute was found of King Hadduyiti, of Guzana. The inscription in Aramaic states that the statute is the likeness (de'muta) and image (tzelem) of the King. (13) Does this suggest a context for the biblical term?

The physical meaning of 'tzelem' was emphasized in a paper by Paul Humbert, who concluded from a study of tzelem and d'mut in the Old

Testament that the phrase [b'tzalmo kid'mu'tanu, 'our image according to our likeness' in Gen. 1:26 means that man was created 'with the same physical form as the deity; of which he is a molded three-dimensional embodiment; delineated and exteriorised'. (14)

Ludwig Koehler similarly considered, in examining the use of tzelem in other Semitic languages, that tzelem is primarily an upright statue, and that the image of God is to be seen primarily in man's upright posture and more generally, in man's creation according to God's tzelem, *i.e.* His image in the sense of form. (15)

God in the Bible is described as if he had hands, eyes, ears, and physical actions are attributed to Him such as laughing, smelling, whistling; He was also spoken of as feeling the emotions of hatred, anger, joy, regret. B. de Geradon suggested that the image may be compared to man's possession of heart, tongue, and limbs, corresponding to the divine faculty of thought, speech, and action. (16)

These are human attributes; of course one can state they are anthropomorphic allegories but again the pshat would have a literal meaning. In the ancient mid-east these were meant as literal attributes of gods. The Hebrew Bible was written at that time and its people would have expected what the words meant in the broader culture they belonged to.

David Clines summarizes his view as follows: 'Man is created not *in* God's image, since God has no image of His own, but as God's image, or rather to be God's image, that is to deputize in the created world for the transcendent God who remains outside the world order. That man is God's image means that he is the visible corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God; he is representative rather than representation, since the idea of portrayal is secondary in the significance of the image. However, the term 'likeness' is an assurance that man is an adequate and faithful representative of God on earth.' (17)

MAN AS A LIKENESS OF GOD

In some way man is like God. Even if the similarity between man and God could not be defined more precisely, the significance of this statement of the nature of man for the understanding of biblical thought could not be over-emphasized. God has impressed His image on this particular creation; man is thus the one godlike creature in all of creation.

Only Man is distinguished from all the animals by being noted as being made in the image or likeness, One of the chief distinguishing marks of

man in relation to the animals is his upright posture, as was already recognized in antiquity. Man named and was to subdue all the animals.

Man's nature is not understood if he is viewed merely as the most highly developed of the animals, with whom he shares the earth, nor is it perceived if he is seen as an infinitesimal being dwarfed by the enormous magnitude of the universe. By the doctrine of the image of God, Genesis affirms the dignity and worth of man, and elevates all men to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinization.

If we take the whole history of interpretations into account, we find two quite distinct approaches to the meaning of the image. The first locates the image in some spiritual quality or faculty of the human person. The setting of the image doctrine at the apex of structure in the creation narrative and from the solemnity of the statement of divine deliberation with which it is introduced that we have a carefully considered theology expressing the dignity and spiritual capacities of man.

The second approach, which leads to a physical interpretation of the image, while equally ancient is not always well appreciated in modern times. Genesis 1:26 makes it clear that it is by the image of God that man is distinguished from all the animals, which share with him the sixth day as the moment of their creation.

DIVINE NATURE

Throughout Genesis chapter 1 the transcendence of God is firmly established; God stands outside and above the created order, and the only continuity between God and his work is the Word pronounced in the Torah. It is of the greatest theological moment therefore that precisely within this depiction of God's transcendent freedom over the whole world-order we find the doctrine of God's image, that is to say, of the real presence, or immanence, of the deity within the world through the person of man.

One senses in the first two chapters Genesis 1 the two aspects of the divine nature; they have at one and the same time freed God from bondage to the world-order by asserting the creaturehood of all that is not God, and have ensured that the statement about the immanence of God firmly excludes any possibility of man's divinization, for man too is explicitly said to be a creature of God. The Old Testament at least as interpreted by Jewish commentators does not see the relation of the transcendence and immanence of God as a problem. Isaiah quotes the angels singing '*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth, His glory fills the whole earth*' (Is. 6:3); the Hebrew word 'kadosh' meaning Holy also means separate. Thus one can say the Lord is separate in heaven and still fills the whole earth. (This same

verse has been seen to justify a pantheistic view of the universe; God is everything and everything is God. Some forms of kabalistic Judaism and even Hasidic theologies seem to border on pantheistic views.) Yet there is considerable tension between these two aspects. Here the polarities are merged in the conception of the transcendent God immanent through the person of man. To be human and to be the image of God are not separable.

1. Unless otherwise stated all translations are from Alter Robert, *The Five Books of Moses*, (Norton, N.Y., 2004).
2. Alter uses the term 'sway', I prefer 'subdue'.
3. The term 'ezer ke-negdo is a very strange Hebrew term which can mean along side of him, opposite him, a counterpart to him, or even help against Himself'. Alter uses 'sustainer beside him', I prefer 'help mate'. Rashi suggests a worthy man will have a helper, an unworthy man one against him.
4. Alter sees the Hebrew as a word pun; human-humus/adam-adama 2:7
5. Maimonides, *Moses, The Guide Of The Perplexed*, Tr. Shlomo Pines, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1963) pg. 24-25).
6. Sussanah Heschel, ed. *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity/ A. J. Heschel*, (N.Y., Farrar Straus, 1996) pg. 159.
7. Fishbane, Michael, 'Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythology', (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) pg. 11.
8. Fishbane, pg. 309-310.
9. Nickelsburg, George, W.E., 'Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins', (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2003) pg. 90.
10. Nickelsburg, pg. 99.
11. Goshen-Gottstein, Alon, 'The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature, *Harvard Theological Review*, 1994, 87.2, pgs. 172-174.
12. Rabbi Isaiah of Trani, *Sanhedrei Gedolah le-Masekhet Sanhedrin* (Jerusalem, 1972), volume 5, section 2, p. 118.
13. Andreas Schule, 'Made in the Image of God', *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 2005, 117, pgs. 9-11.
14. Quoted by Clines, D.J.A., *The Image of God in Man*, *Tyndale Bulletin*, 1968, 17, pg. 56. 'Avec la même physique clue la divinité, qu'il en est une effigie concrète et plastique, figurée et extérieure' (P. Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du paradis et de la chute dans la Genèse*, Secrétariat de l'Université, Neuchâtel (1940) 153-175, especially 157). Cf. also his 'Trois notes sur Genèse I', in *Interpretationes ad V. Tertinentes Sigmundo Mowinckel missae*, Forlaget Land og Kirke, Oslo (1955) 85-96.
15. Clines, pg. 56, L. Koehler, 'Die Grundstelle der Imago-Dei-Lehre', *Theologische Zeitschrift* (hereafter *TZ*) 4 (1948) 56-22, especially 20f.
16. B. de Geradon, 'L'homme à l'image de Dieu', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 80 (1958) 683-695, especially 689, quoted by Clines, pg. 60.
17. Clines, *The Image of God*, pg. 101.