

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים 25 And God made
אֶת־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ the the land animal after its kind
וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ and the cattle after its kind
וְאֶת־כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ and all that crawls the ground after its kind;
וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 26 And God said
נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם "Let us make man
בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ in our image, after our likeness;

The sixth day:
land animals

Fish were the first living creatures to be created, and the only animals not to be corrupted in the generation of the Flood.³⁴ This is why fish is traditionally served as the first course of the Shabbat meal.

-R. MENACHEM MENDEL OF VORKA

1:24

**"The earth shall
bring out living creatures"**

All the works of creation were created in their full stature, fully mature, fully formed.

-R. YEHOASHUA BEN LEVI IN TALMUD
-RASHI

God created a mature, fully developed world, with everything that man requires to begin fulfilling his mission and purpose already in place (just as Adam and Eve themselves were created not as newborn infants, but as mature adults). Hence there is no real contradiction between the Torah's account of creation and the scientific estimate that the universe is many billions of years old.

-MAAYANAH SHEL TORAH

"The earth shall bring out living creatures" also alludes to the resurrection of the dead in the World to Come, when those interred in the earth will emerge as living beings.

-BEREISHITH RABBATHI

1:26

"Let us make man"

When Moses was transcribing the Torah and he reached the verse, "Let us make man...", he said: "Master of the Universe! Why are you leaving an opening for the heretics (to claim that there is more than one god)?" Said God to him: "Write it thus, and whoever wants to err, let him err."

-R. SHMUEL BAR NACHMAN
IN MIDRASH RABBAH

NOTES

1:26

LET US MAKE (נַעֲשֶׂה ~ na'aseh) • according to *Saadia Gaon*, God is employing the royal "We"; but most commentaries follow the midrashim that explain the plural as indicating a divine "consultation," either internal or with some element of creation—see commentaries to this verse • also **man has been made** (see midrash on p. 71) -*R. Huna of Ziporin in Midrash Rabbah*
MAN (אָדָם ~ adam) • i.e. **human** (as opposed to אִישׁ ~ ish, which usually means "man" in the sense of "male"—cf. verse 23) • also the proper name of the first man, **Adam**
Related to • **earth** (אֲדָמָה ~ adamah) -*Midrash Rabbah; Radak* • **blood** (דָּם ~ dam) -*Shaloh* • **to resemble** (דָּמָה ~ damah), indicating the formulation of the human soul in the divine image -*R. Menachem Azariah da Fano; Shaloh* • has the same letters as the word **very** (מְאֹד ~ me'od) indicating man's norm-shattering potential -*Midrash Rabbah; R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi*
IMAGE (צֶלֶם ~ tzelem) • also **mold** -*Rashi*

With whom did God consult when he said "Let us make man"?

R. Yehoshua says: He consulted with the heavens and the earth.

R. Shmuel bar Nachman says: He consulted the works of the each of the six days of creation.

R. Ami says: He consulted his own heart.

R. Chanina says: He consulted the angels.

R. Yehoshua of Sichnin says: He consulted the souls of the righteous.

-MIDRASH RABBAH

God said to the Torah, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."³⁵

-PIRKEI D'R. ELIEZER

Since man was created in the likeness of the angels, and they would envy him, God consulted with them. From here we learn God's humility: even though it leaves an opening for heretics, the Torah did not hesitate to use the plural "us" to teach proper conduct and the trait of humility.

-RASHI

Man is unique in that he is comprised of both a mortal body, which resembles the earth from which it was made, and an immortal Godly spirit. Thus God says, "Let us make man"—I, together with the earth that I have created, for he shall resemble us both.

-R. YOSEF KIMCHI; NACHMANIDES

God invited all elements of creation to participate in the creation of man, since it is through man that all else is elevated or debased.

-R. MORDECHAI YOSEF OF IZHBITZA

The prophet Isaiah declares, "Your people are all righteous." So when the midrash states that God consulted with the souls of the righteous, this implies that God consulted with each individual soul whether it should be created!

This gives us a deeper appreciation of the principle of "free choice": it is not only that we are free to choose how we behave in any given situation, but also the question of whether or not we should be sent down to this world to be placed in that situation—that, too, is our choice.

-THE REBBE

³⁴ See commentary to 7:22.

³⁵ The human body has 248 organs and 365 veins, mirroring the Torah's 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions.

"In our image"

God says, "Let us make man in our image," for man shall include within himself all of the ten *sefiroth* (divine attributes), and each *sefirah* will impart something to him.³⁶ -ZOHAR

"From my flesh I perceive God" (Job 19:26). By contemplating the workings of his own body and its faculties, man can understand, by way of metaphor, the manner in which God acts through creation. -BECHAYEI

The image of the soul of man is engraved in the mind of God, like a father who carries the image of his child in his mind at all times, also when his child is in a faraway place. The difference is that for God past and future are one, so the image of man was etched in the divine mind even before God created him.

-R. DOV BER OF MEZERITCH

"In our image, after our likeness"

Man is the image of the divine in the sense that as God is sovereign in the heavens, humanity rules the earth. -SAADIA GAON

The "divine image" in man is the intellect: the means by which man can distinguish between truth and falsehood; the means by which man can know and comprehend the intangible, so that he comes to resemble the angels who are pure form without substance. -MAIMONIDES

Man is the only being who, like God, acts by choice. -SFORNO

Man's likeness to God expresses itself in the human striving and ability to become a creator.³⁷ -R. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

"In our image, after our likeness"

Man is fashioned in the divine "image," and woman in God's "likeness."³⁸ -ZOHAR
-ALSHICH

The *tzadik* (perfectly righteous person) personifies the divine image. The *baal teshuvah* ("returnee" or penitent) actualizes the divine "likeness." -R. MENACHEM AZARIAH DA FANO

"In our image" refers to the soul; "after our likeness" refers to the body. For also regarding

the human body it is said, "From my flesh I perceive God."³⁹ -SHALOH

It is not enough for man to reflect God in his "image" or inner makeup; he must also exhibit a divine "likeness" in his behavior and actions. -SEFATH EMETH

"And they shall dominate..."

The entire world was created to serve me, and I was created to serve my creator.

-R. SHIMON BEN ELAZAR IN TALMUD

The word "they shall dominate" (יָרְדוּ ~ *yirdu*) can also be read as "they shall descend into" (יֵרְדוּ ~ *yeirdu*). When man is worthy, he rules over the other creations; when man is not worthy, he falls lower than them and they rule over him. -RASHI

When the human being is not mindful of his greatness and profanes his divine image by becoming as the animals and acting as them, then he literally "descends into" an animal, bird or fish, to be reincarnated in its form after his death. -CHAREIDIM

That man was given sovereignty over all living creatures also means that, within man himself, that which is uniquely human has sovereignty over those aspects of himself which he shares with other creatures. Namely, that the intellect has the power to rule the feelings and desires. -R. YITZCHAK HUTNER

1:27**"God created the man"**

Why did God create mankind as a single human being?

To teach us that whoever destroys a single life, it is as if he destroyed the entire world; and whoever sustains a single life, it is as if he sustained the entire world.

So that no person can say to his fellow, "My ancestor is greater than yours."

So that the heretics would not say, "There are numerous authorities in Heaven."

To demonstrate the greatness of the Creator: when a human being stamps many coins with a single die, they are all identical; yet God stamped every person with the template of the first man, and not one is identical to his fellow.

And to teach us that every person is obligated to say: "For my sake was the world created." -TALMUD

NOTES

AND IN ALL THE EARTH (וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ ~ *uve'chol haaretz*) • man will subjugate the earth itself, digging into it for copper and iron -*Nachmanides*

1:28

CONQUER IT (וְכִבַּשְׁתָּהּ ~ *ve'chivshuha*)

• the pronunciation implies the second person plural, but the "deficient" spelling means it can also be read as the second person singular; hence the two opinions in the Talmud if this command is directed to both the man and the woman, or only to the man—see commentaries to this verse

"Male and female he created them"

The simple meaning of the verse is that here the Torah is telling us that Adam and Eve were both created on the sixth day, without elaborating on the details of how they were formed, which it does in the next chapter.

According to the midrash, God initially created man as a two-faced body—a male and a female joined back to back—and then separated them.⁴⁰ -RASHI

1:28**"Be fruitful and multiply"**

Of the core ideas of this mitzvah is the principle that God desires that the world be populated. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "He did not create it that it be desolate; he created it to be settled." Indeed, this is the mitzvah that enables the fulfillment of all the other mitzvot, since the mitzvot were not commanded to the angels but to human beings. -CHINUCH

A person fulfills the obligation to "be fruitful and multiply" upon begetting at least one son and one daughter. But also after one has fulfilled the basic obligation, it is a mitzvah to have as many children as one is able.⁴¹

-TALMUD; SHULCHAN ARUCH

There is another dimension to this mitzvah as well: to study the Torah, so that the divine wisdom enters one's mind and germinates there, giving birth to new insights. -ZOHAR

The first mitzvah in the Torah is that one Jew should make another Jew (i.e., have a positive influence on a fellow Jew's service of God).

-R. SHALOM DOVBER OF LUBAVITCH

³⁶ The *Zohar* speaks of ten *sefiroth* or "attributes" which God assumes to define his relationship with creation. Each creation derives from one of the ten *sefiroth*; but the human soul is unique in that it incorporates all ten, being modeled after the whole of the divine "persona" they describe. See *The Ten Sefiroth* on pages 11-12.

³⁷ See also commentary from *The Rebbe* on page 2:19.

³⁸ See *The Residue and the Line* on page 8.

³⁹ See *The Physical Reality* on page 12.

⁴⁰ See commentaries to 2:7 and 2:18-23.

⁴¹ See commentaries to 9:1, 9:7 and 25:1.