

וַיִּרְדּוּ  
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וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ  
וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:  
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בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ  
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וּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם  
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לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ:

and they shall dominate  
the fish of the sea and the bird of the heavens  
and the cattle and all the earth  
and every crawling thing that crawls on the earth.”

And God created the man in his image  
in the divine image he created him;  
male and female he created them.

*The creation  
of man*

And God blessed them  
and God said to them

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it;  
and dominate the fish of the sea and the bird of the heavens  
and every animal that crawls upon the earth.”

And God said

“Here I have given to you  
every herb that seeds seed  
which is upon the face of all the earth  
and every tree in which there is a tree-fruit that seeds seed;  
for you it shall be for food.

#### ‘And conquer it’

The man is commanded to procreate, but the woman is not so commanded. From where is this derived? Because it says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it.” Man, whose manner is to conquer, is subject to this commandment; whereas woman, whose manner is not to conquer, is not so obligated.

*R. Yochanan ben Berokah* says: The commandment is to both of them, as it says, “And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’”<sup>41</sup> - TALMUD

Obviously, the woman is no less integral to the mitzvah to “be fruitful and multiply” than the man. Indeed, the fact that the man is commanded to procreate and not the woman indicates that, for the woman, giving birth to life and settling the earth is in complete harmony with her natural strivings and desires, so that no commandment is required.

This is the deeper meaning of the rule, “It is the manner of the man to conquer, but it

is not the manner of the woman to conquer.” Both man and woman are charged with the mission to develop the world as a home for God. But for the male, this is an act of conquest, something he compels himself to do in obedience to a divine command; whereas for the woman it is a most natural endeavor. So, too, in regard to the manner in which they go about achieving this task. Man, by nature a “conqueror,” does so by challenging and vanquishing the prevalent reality. In contrast, the woman transforms her environment by nurturing and encouraging its development from within. - THE REBBE

#### 1:29-30

##### “I have given to you every herb...”

Here the Torah places the human being on equal footing with the animals in regard to his nourishment. Adam and Eve were not permitted to kill a creature and eat its flesh; rather man and animal both are to feed on the vegetable produce of the earth.<sup>42</sup> It was only to

Noah and his descendants that meat was permitted, as it is written (9:3), “Every crawling thing which is alive shall be for you for food; as the green herb I have given all to you” – as I permitted the green herb to Adam.

- TALMUD; RASHI

Still, man is distinguished from the animals in that the human would be sustained by grains and fruits (“herb that seeds seed... tree-fruit that seeds seed”), while the animals are to feed on “all green herbage.” After man sinned, however, he was demoted to “eat the herb of the field” (3:18).<sup>43</sup> - NACHMANIDES

These verses are not simply to inform us of Adam’s diet, but of his place in creation. After being told that man is created in the divine image and that he will conquer the earth and “dominate... every animal that crawls upon the earth,” we now discover that he is nevertheless a creature who is sustained by the same ecology as any other organism. Nor does his elevated status entail the privilege to kill animals and eat them. This is to drive home the point that man’s dominion over his fellow creatures

In addition to the repeated “them” in this verse, the words “be fruitful and multiply” (פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ in the Hebrew) are also in the second person plural. See also Notes to this verse, s.v. “Conquer it.”

<sup>42</sup> This is why many of commentaries conclude that the “skin coats” in which Adam and Eve are clothed in 3:21 were not coats made out of animal skins killed for that purpose, and offer a variety of explanations as to how these skins were obtained, or alternate meanings for the phrase “skin coats”; see Notes to 3:21.

<sup>43</sup> See, however, commentary to 3:19.



וְלִכְל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ 30  
וְלִכְל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וְלִכְל־רֹמֵשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה  
אֶת־כָּל־יֶרֶק עֹשֶׂב לְאֹכֶלָה  
וַיְהִי־כֵן:  
וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
וְהִנֵּה־טוֹב מְאֹד  
וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר  
יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי: פ

And for every animal of the earth  
and for every bird of the heavens  
and for every thing that crawls upon the earth  
in which there is a soul of life –  
all green herbage for food”;  
and it was so.

And God saw all which he made  
and behold it is very good;  
and it was evening and it was morning  
the sixth day.

*God surveys his  
creation at the close  
of the sixth day*

derives not from his own superiority, but rather from his servitude to his divinely-ordained role in creation—a role he must approach with humility rather than arrogance, with a sense of responsibility rather than privilege.<sup>44</sup>

-THE REBBE

{see commentaries to 9:3}

## 1:31

### “All that he made... is very good”

The sages taught: Also those things which seem superfluous in your eyes are integral to the world's creation. Everything has its mission. God will employ a snake, or a flea, or a frog, to carry out his plan.

-MIDRASH RABBAH

All that is, is good. What is not good is that which is not: death is an absence of life, darkness a non-presence of light, illness a deficiency of health, stupidity a lack of wisdom.

Thus the Torah states, “God saw all that he made, and behold, it is very good,” and the sages declare that “nothing bad descends from Above.” For all that God actively makes is good. The weakness and impermanence of the physical is a function of God choosing to partially absent the divine quality of life from it, so that the physical substance is a combination of existence and absence.

-MAIMONIDES

If one truly believes that God, who is the ultimate source of life, goodness and bliss, is creating everything out of absolute nothingness

in each and every moment of time—then how can one imagine that anything bad is happening to him? Indeed, the truth is that only good comes from God. It is only that there are two types of good: revealed good, which we experience as such; and hidden good, which comes from a place so lofty that our finite faculties are incapable of assimilating it, so that we experience it as pain and suffering.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

### “Very good”

During the six days of creation, God sees his work as “good”;<sup>45</sup> it is only when the work is completed that it is deemed “very good.” For the goodness of creation as a whole is greater than the sum of the goodness of its individual parts.

-SFORNO

The letters of the word “very” (מְאֹד ~ me’od) are the same as the word “man” (אָדָם ~ adam). Thus: “very good” also reads “good, man.”

-MIDRASH RABBAH

Meaning: All things achieve their purpose through man. So it is only after the creation of man that all that God created could be termed “very good.”

-RADAK

“Good, man” tells us that good is specific to the man. What one person achieves in tranquility, may for another be good only when attained with difficulty and suffering. For God supplies to each his individual good.

-R. CHAYIM OF CZERNOWITZ

Said *R. Shmuel bar Nachman*: I remember riding on the shoulders of my grandfather, going up to Kfar Chanan by way of Beith She’an, where I heard *R. Shimon ben Elazar*

expounding in the name of *R. Meir*: “Very good” (טוֹב מְאֹד ~ tov me’od) should be read as “death is good” (טוֹב מָוֶת ~ tov maveth).<sup>46</sup>

-MIDRASH RABBAH

Death may seem negative to the individual. But for “all that he made”—for creation as a whole—it drives the cycle of life and its continual regeneration.

-MAIMONIDES

All creations were created as God desired them, except for the human being, who attains his perfection by his own efforts. King Solomon therefore proclaims, “Better the day of death than the day of birth”—for it is only at the very last moment of a person's allotted time in this world that his achievements are completed. This is why our sages say that “God does not attach his name to the righteous during their lifetimes,” as they have not yet fulfilled their task in this world.

Indeed, with all other creations it says “God saw that it is good.” But following the creation of man it says, “God saw... that it is very good”—meaning, as *R. Meir* interpreted it, “death is good.” Man's goodness is a lifelong endeavor, whose culminating moment is at the moment of his death.

-AKEIDAH

<sup>44</sup> Thus *Rashi* emphasizes that also when Noah and his descendants were later granted permission to eat meat, it was expressly placed in this context—on the same basis on which Adam was permitted to eat the vegetative growth of the soil.

<sup>45</sup> 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25.

<sup>46</sup> Death was introduced into creation at the close of the Sixth Day, following Adam's sin as related in 3:1-24. See also commentaries to 2:17.



**"In our image"**

God says, "Let us make man in our image," for man shall include within himself all of the ten *sefirot* (divine attributes), and each *sefirah* will impart something to him.<sup>35</sup> -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.<sup>36</sup> -R. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

**"In our image, after our likeness"**

Man is fashioned in the divine "image," and woman in God's "likeness."<sup>37</sup> -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."<sup>38</sup> -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" (יִרְדּוּ ~ yirdu) can also be read as "they shall descend into" (יִרְדּוּ ~ 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

<sup>38</sup> See *The Physical Reality* on page 12.

**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** (וְנִכְשְׁתָּהּ ~ 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.<sup>39</sup> -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.<sup>40</sup>

-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

<sup>35</sup> The *Zohar* speaks of ten *sefirot* or "attributes" which God assumes to define his relationship with creation. Each creation derives from one of the ten *sefirot*; 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 Sefirot* on pages 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> See also commentary from *The Rebbe* to 2:19.

<sup>37</sup> See *The Residue and the Line* on page 8.

<sup>39</sup> See commentaries to 2:7 and 2:18-23.

<sup>40</sup> See commentaries to 9:1, 9:7 and 25:1.