

וְכָל־שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה  
 וְכָל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ  
 כִּי־לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
 וְאָדָם אֵין  
 לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה:  
 וְאֵד יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ  
 וְהִשָּׁקָה אֶת־כָּל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:  
 וַיִּצְרֹף יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם  
 עֹפֶר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה  
 וַיִּפֹּחַ בָּאָפִיו נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים  
 וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

5 And every shrub of the field  
 was yet to be on the earth  
 and every herb of the field was yet to grow;  
 for GOD Almighty did not make rain upon the earth  
 and there is naught a man  
 to work the soil.  
 6 And a mist would rise from the earth;  
 and water the entire face of the soil.  
 7 And GOD Almighty formed the man  
 dust from the earth  
 and he blew into his nostrils a breath of life;  
 and the man became a living soul.

*The first rainfall*

*The formation  
 of man*

Said *R. Shimon bar Yochai*: I wonder why they argue. I say that the heavens and the earth were created together, like a pot with its cover.  
 -TALMUD

For the two thousand years from Adam to Abraham, the heavens were indeed "first," as is the order in the first verse of the Torah. But with the appearance of Abraham, alluded to in this verse, the primacy of the earth came to light.<sup>71</sup>  
 -CHATHAM SOFER

The deeper meaning of the debate between the schools of Shamai and Hillel: is the purpose of life on earth to uncover and actualize spiritual potential in the soul of man and in creation, or is it to develop and sanctify the physical reality?<sup>72</sup>  
 -THE REBBE

## 2:5-6

### "Rain upon the earth"

This comes to teach us that nothing grew from the earth until the first man appreciated the need for rain and prayed for it.<sup>73</sup>

-R. ASI IN TALMUD; RASHI

There are three things that are each the equivalent of the other two: earth, man and rain. Without earth there is no rain; without rain

there is no earth; without either one, there is not man.  
 -R. SHIMON BAR YOCHAI

At first, the earth would be nourished by wellsprings rising from below. But then God decided that it should drink of the rains falling from above. There are four reasons why God decided this: 1) so that strongmen should not control the earth's water; 2) to wash away bad vapors; 3) that the higher elevations should receive on equal footing with the lower; 4) that all should raise their eyes heavenward for their sustenance.  
 -R. CHANAN OF TZIPORI  
 IN MIDRASH RABBAH

## 2:7

### "God formed the man..."

Everything described in this parashah—the creation of man, his placement in the Garden, his division into male and female, the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the conflict between Cain and Abel—should be understood on two levels: as the story of the first individual human being, Adam; and as the story of the whole of humankind.

-RADAK

The Torah offers two accounts of the creation of man—in 1:26-30 and in 2:7-24. The explanation of the differences between them lies not in an imaginary contradiction between two traditions but in a real contradiction in the nature of man. These are two Adams, two types, two representatives of humanity.

The first Adam is Majestic Man—aggressive, bold, and victory minded. His motto is success—to harness and dominate the elemental natural forces and to put them at his disposal. Employing the divine image in which he is formed—his intellect and creativity—he builds,

plants, harvests, regulates rivers, heals the sick, governs countries, explores the outer limits of his world, creates beauty and constructs mathematized models of the cosmos.

The second Adam is Covenantal Man. His goal is not success but redemptiveness. He seeks not control over his environment but control over himself; not to confront and defeat mute nature, but to allow himself to be confronted and defeated by a Higher and Truer Being; not to advance to the outer reaches of his universe, but to retreat to its center.

Hence the differences in the two accounts. While the first Adam exults in his divine image, the second Adam is ever aware that his body is a handful of dust sustained by the breath of God. Where God summons the first Adam to exercise mastery, to "fill the earth and conquer it," the second Adam is summoned to serve, "to cultivate the garden and to keep it."<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Also: The first Adam never experiences loneliness, nor is he called upon to sacrifice a part of himself in order that his female companion come into being. He emerges into the world together with Eve as two individuals and God addresses himself to both of them. They may need each other pragmatically, to better pursue common objectives, but ontologically they do not belong to each other. Whereas the second Adam experiences ontological incompleteness and must quest for a different type of community. This new companionship is not attained through collaborative achievement, but through surrender. "God Almighty made fall a slumber upon the man"—Adam is overpowered and defeated, and in defeat he finds his companion.

The first Adam meets the female all by himself, while the second Adam is introduced to Eve by God, who himself becomes a partner in their community. Indeed, the togetherness of God and man is

<sup>71</sup> See commentary to 24:3.

<sup>72</sup> See commentaries to 28:20-22.

<sup>73</sup> According to *R. Asi* and *Rashi*, the "sproutage" brought forth by the earth on the third day (as per 1:11-12 above) only came up to just below the surface of the soil, but did not emerge until the sixth day, after man prayed for rain. According to *Nachmanides*, however, the earth was covered with vegetation on the third day, and 2:5-6 describes the lands cultivated by man. See also the opinions cited in *Notes* to 2:6.

## NOTES

2:5

**SHRUB** (שִׁיחַ ~ si'ach) also means **conversation** and **prayer** indicating that • trees converse with each other and with all creatures - *Midrash Rabbah* • the tree is a prototype of man, "the speaker" - *Ibn Ezra* • every growing thing praises God with its unique song - *Bechayei Soil* (עֵדָה ~ adamah) • also **ground** and **earth**

2:6

**MIST** (תֶּן ~ eid) • **cloud** - *Onkelos; Saadia Gaon; Ibn Ezra, Sforino* • **moisture** - *Bechor Shor* • **wellspring** - *Rashi*

This occurred • on the sixth day of creation, to wet the ground so that the body of man could be molded, as described in the next verse - *Midrash Rabbah; Rashi* • on the fourth day, after the sun was placed in the heavens - *Ibn Ezra; Radak; Chizkuni* • on the third day, when the earth was still moist from the water which had covered it - *Maimonides; Bechor Shor*

2:7

**AND HE FORMED** (וַיַּצֵּר ~ va'yitser) spelled with two 's (in contrast to 2:19 where the same word, referring to the formation of the animals, is spelled with a single 's) to indicate • the duality of the animal and the angelic in man - *Midrash Rabbah* • that man is twice formed, for this world and for the World to Come - *Tanchuma; Rashi* • the **two inclinations** (יְצָרִים ~ yetzarim) in man - toward good and toward evil - *Talmud; Targum Yonathan* • man's original form was both male and female - *Recanati*

**DUST** (עָפָר ~ afar) • more precisely **soil**

**BREATH** (נְשָׁמָה ~ nishmath) • also one of the five classic terms for **soul** - *Midrash Rabbah*

In every one of us abide these two personae. Both strive to be themselves, to be what God commanded them to be, namely, man. Hence the abiding loneliness of the man of faith. Charged with the responsibility as both a majestic and a covenantal being, he is never fully at home as either, but is repeatedly summoned to advance from the covenantal center to the cosmic periphery, and back again.

-R. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

### "Dust of the earth"

God collected soil from every part of the earth, to create man red, brown and white.

-TARGUM YONATHAN

The body of man was taken from every part of the world, so that wherever a person might die, the earth would accept his body for burial. Also, God took earth from the site of the Altar (in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem), so

indispensable for the covenantal community: finitude and infinity, temporality and eternity, creature and creator bind themselves together and participate in a unitive existence.

Hence another difference between the two accounts. The divine name *Elokim*, which denotes God as the source of the cosmic dynamics, suffices to characterize the relationship prevailing between majestic man and his Creator addressing himself to him through the cosmic occurrence. But the intimate relationship with God for which covenantal man craves cannot be found in the cosmic *Elokim* encounter, only in the face-to-face meeting of the finite and the infinite symbolized by the Tetragrammaton, which therefore appears in the Torah's account of the second Adam. -R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik

that man should be formed from the place through which he achieves atonement.

-TANCHUMA; JERUSALEM TALMUD; RASHI

The seemingly inanimate soil is the lowest tier of creation—lower than the vegetable and animal, and certainly lower than the spiritual creations. Nevertheless, "the beginning is embedded in the end": the infinite power of the Creator is reflected in the lowly earth in a way that surpasses even the most supernal beings. Indeed, only in the physical earth is vested the exclusively divine power to create something from nothing, through the earth's constant sprouting of plants of all sorts, and all forms of life deriving their nourishment from the earth.

Accordingly, it can be well understood the greatness of the physical mitzvahs performed by the body, whose fulfillment is the purpose for which the soul descends to this world.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

### "He blew into his nostrils a breath of life"

In addition to the animal soul in man, which was fashioned in the same way as the vital souls of all the other living creatures created on the sixth day—as described in 1:24 above—God breathed a uniquely divine soul into the human body.<sup>75</sup>

-NACHMANIDES

<sup>75</sup> See citation from R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi to 25:23.

One who forcefully blows, blows from his innermost being, expending his innermost vitality.<sup>76</sup> In the same way, God invested his innermost being in the soul of man, so that the soul is veritably a part of God. -ZOHAR

As a glassblower who shapes a vessel with his breath, determining its size and form by the manner of his blowing, so, too, does the Creator "blow" each soul in its distinct form, which expands within the material of the body to mold the body according to its own contours.

-ARI

It is written, "The soul of man is a lamp of God" (Proverbs 20:27). The flame of the lamp pulls upwards, straining to tear free of the wick and rise heavenward; though this would spell its own demise, such is its striving by its nature. So, too, does the Godly soul in man constantly strive to tear free of the body and the material existence and be nullified within its source in God.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

### "And the man became a living soul"

A speaking spirit.

-ONKELOS

The animals, too, are referred to as "living souls" (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה ~ nefesh chayah) in 1:20 and 1:24 above. But the human is imbued with an additional dimension of life—the gift of intelligence and speech.<sup>77</sup>

-RASHI

The soul is intrinsically alive; the body is intrinsically dead. In their union, each incurs the state of the other: the body experiences the life of the soul, and the soul experiences the death of sin when the body misleads it.

-BECHAYEI

In our present reality, it is the soul which imparts a higher sensibility and an awareness of the divine to the body. But in the World to Come, the process will be reversed.

<sup>76</sup> In contrast to the divine "speech" that categorizes all other creations, connoting a more "external" involvement.

<sup>77</sup> A common theme in the classic philosophical and kabbalistic texts is the division of creation into four kingdoms, each possessing a higher degree of life and spirituality than the previous: 1) *domeim*, or "still" matter; 2) *tzomei'ach*, growing things; 3) *chai*, animals; 4) *medaber*, "the speaker" (i.e., man).

Life is the capacity of a thing to exceed itself, to reach beyond the limits of its own existence. In this sense a plant is more alive than a stone, and an animal, which not only grows in size but also moves from place to place, is a higher form of life—i.e., more "spiritual"—than a plant. And the quality which most expresses the uniqueness of the human being, even more than his superior intelligence, is speech and communication: man's capacity to transcend a self-defined reality and enter the inner world of another. -*The Rebbe*

- וַיֵּטֶעַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים 8 And GOD Almighty planted  
גִּן-בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם a garden in Eden in the east;  
וַיִּשֶׂם שָׁם and he placed there  
אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר: the man which he had formed.  
וַיַּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאֲדָמָה 9 And GOD Almighty made grow from the soil

*The Garden  
of Eden*

# LEXICON & NOTES

## 2:8

**EDEN** (עֵדֶן) • means **pleasure and delight** -Bechor Shor; Radak • **eternity** -R. Shlomo Zvi Schick

**IN THE EAST** (מִקְדָּם ~ *mi'kedem*) -Saadia Gaon; Rashi; Ibn Ezra; Radak • the garden was in the eastern part of Eden -Lekach Tov; Rashi • or **from before creation** -Talmud; Onkelos; Nachmanides • on the third day, before man's creation on the sixth -R. Shmuel bar Nachman in Midrash Rabbah • on the equator -Ibn Ezra

## 2:9

**COVEYOUS** (נִחְמָד ~ *nechmad*) • also **delightful** -Hirsch  
**KNOWLEDGE** (דַּעַת ~ *daath*) • **experience** -Maimonides • **desire** -Nachmanides; Bechayei • **awareness** -Sforno • **assimilation** -R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi • see commentaries to 3:5

## 2:11

**PISHON** (פִּישׁוֹן) • means **swells or flax-grower** -Rashi • the Nile -Zohar; Saadia Gaon; Rashi • the Ganges -Josephus; Targum Yonathan; Abarbanel

## 2:12

**CRYSTAL** (בְּדֹלַח ~ *bedolach*) -Rashi • **pearls** -Saadia Gaon; Radak  
**SHOHAM** (שֹׁהַם) • variously identified as **onyx, beryl, lapis lazuli or sardonyx** -Kaplan • used in the making of the priestly garments (see Exodus 28)

## 2:13

**GIHON** (גִּיחוֹן) • means **battering waters** -Rashi • the Nile -Josephus; Abarbanel  
**CUSH** (כּוּשׁ) • **Ethiopia or Nubia**

## 2:14

**HIDDEKEL** (חִדְקֶל) • means **sharp and light** in reference to the quality of its water -Rashi • the Tigris -Onkelos; Saadia Gaon; Ibn Ezra  
**IT IS THE EUPHRATES** • it is the river that flows from Eden, from which the other three branch off -Talmud

## 2:9

### "Covetous to the sight"

The first thing which the Torah says about the trees of the garden, even before it notes their utility as a source of food, is that they were **delightful to look upon**. This attests to the value the Creator places on the aesthetic sense for the higher calling of man. Indeed, joy in the beauties of nature forms a bridge towards what is spiritually and morally beautiful.

-HIRSCH

### "The tree of life...

### and the tree of the knowledge"

The Tree of Life healed the sick and refreshed the aged; had man remained in the Garden he would have eaten from it whenever he grew old and weak, and thus lived forever.<sup>72</sup>

-BECHOR SHOR

The "Tree of Life" is the Torah.<sup>73</sup> The "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" is the human intellect.

-TARGUM YERUSHALMI  
-REMA

The "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" is the material reality—the "gleaming husk"<sup>74</sup> that obscures the divine essence of creation even as it allows a glimmer of light to shine through, presenting an admixture of good and evil.

-ARI

<sup>72</sup> See 3:22.

<sup>73</sup> As in *Proverbs 3:18*: "It is a tree of life for those who hold fast to it." Within Torah itself, the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" is the "body" of Torah, which addresses and deals with both the good and the bad in the world; and the "Tree of Life" is the inner soul of Torah, which concerns itself directly with the study of the divine. -R. Chaim Vital

<sup>74</sup> In the terminology of *Kabbalah*, evil is referred to as *kelipath* or "husks." This metaphor expresses the paradox of evil: on the one hand, evil exists only to facilitate the actualization of good, as the function of the husk is to serve and protect the kernel or fruit within. On the other hand, evil obscures and obstructs the goodness in the world and must be defeated and rejected in order for the good to be revealed, in the same way that the husk needs to be penetrated and discarded in order to access the kernel it conceals.

Ari explains that there are two types of *kelipath*.

The are the "opaque husks" which completely hide the good they contain, so that we experience it as utter evil. And there is what he calls *kelipath nogah*, the "gleaming" or "translucent" husk which only partly

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge grew from one root; only above ground did they separate into two trees.<sup>75</sup> -BECHAYEI

{also see commentaries to 3:5 and 3:22}

### "In the middle of the garden"

Do not imagine that there is only one way to arrive at the divine truth. For the Torah states that the Tree of Life is in the *middle of the garden*, implying that it is equally approachable from all sides. A person may be a Torah scholar, a businessman, a physician, a laborer—whatever corner of the garden of life he occupies, as long as he makes the desire and commitment to serve God the center and focus of his endeavor; the Tree of Life is accessible to him.

-CHAFETZ CHAYIM

## 2:10

### "A river goes out from Eden"

Said R. Nachman bar Yitzchak: All the rivers of the world are offshoots of that river.

Said R. Yehoshua ben Levi: The entire world derives nourishment from the essence of the Garden of Eden.

-TALMUD

Within the human being, "eden" is the mind, "river" is the intellect and "the garden" is the heart. Thus: "A river goes out from Eden to water the garden."

-RADAK

"Eden" is God's delight in his creation, from which derive all spiritual delights, and ultimately all material pleasures as well.

-R. DOVBER OF LUBAVITCH

The *Talmud* relates that when R. Akiva heard the sounds of hilarity issuing from hedonistic city of Rome, he laughed and said: "If so it is for those who transgress God's will, how much more so for those who fulfill God's will."

The deeper meaning of R. Akiva's words is as follows. As is known, the divine vitality which imparts existence and life to all

conceals its essence, so that it presents to us both good and evil aspects to its existence.

<sup>75</sup> This is indicated by the fact that the Torah places them both in the same location—"in the (very) middle of the Garden." See also commentary from Chizkuni to 3:22.

- כָּל־עֵץ נֹחֵד לְמַרְאָה  
וְטוֹב לְמֵאֲכָל  
וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַגָּן  
וְעֵץ  
הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע:  
וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מֵעֵדֶן  
לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת־הַגָּן  
וּמִשָּׁם יִפְרָד  
וְהָיָה לְאַרְבַּעָה רָאשִׁים:  
שֵׁם הָאֶחָד פִּישׁוֹן;  
הוּא הַסֹּבֵב  
אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ הַחַוִּילָה  
אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם הַזָּהָב:  
וְהַזָּהָב הַהוּא טוֹב;  
שָׁם הַבְּדֹלָח וְאֶבֶן הַשְּׁהָם:  
וְשֵׁם־הַנָּהָר הַשֵּׁנִי גִיחוֹן;  
הוּא הַסֹּבֵב  
אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כּוּשׁ:  
וְשֵׁם הַנָּהָר הַשְּׁלִישִׁי חִדְקֵל  
הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ קִדְמַת אַשּׁוּר  
וְהַנָּהָר הָרְבִיעִי הוּא פָּרָת;
- every tree that is covetous to the sight  
and good for eating;  
and the tree of life in the middle of the garden  
and the tree  
of the knowledge of good and evil.  
10 And a river goes out from Eden  
to water the garden;  
and from there it separates  
and becomes four heads.  
11 The name of the one is Pishon;  
it is the one which compasses  
the entire land of Havilah  
where there is the gold.  
12 And the gold of that land is good;  
there is the crystal and the shoham stone.  
13 And the name of the second river is Gihon;  
it is the one which compasses  
the entire land of Cush.  
14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel  
it is the one which runs east of Assyria;  
and the fourth river, it is the Euphrates.

*The four rivers*

creations undergoes many contractions, concealments and demunitions before it can enter into a realm that is so distant from its origin that it fails to recognize, and can even deny and rebel against, its own source of life.<sup>76</sup> Now if the divine vitality can generate such enjoyment even in such a place, imagine the pleasure and joy experienced by those who maintain an awareness of their source and an intimate relationship with their creator.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

## 2:12

### "The gold of that land is good"

Said *R. Abahu*: God did a great favor to man by creating gold, as a person can make change from one small gold coin and it will suffice for many purchases.

Said *R. Yochanan*: There is no Torah like the Torah studied in the Land of Israel, and there is no wisdom like the wisdom learned in the Land of Israel. As it is written, "The gold of that land is good."

-MIDRASH RABBAH

<sup>76</sup> See *The Four Worlds*, pp. 604-605.

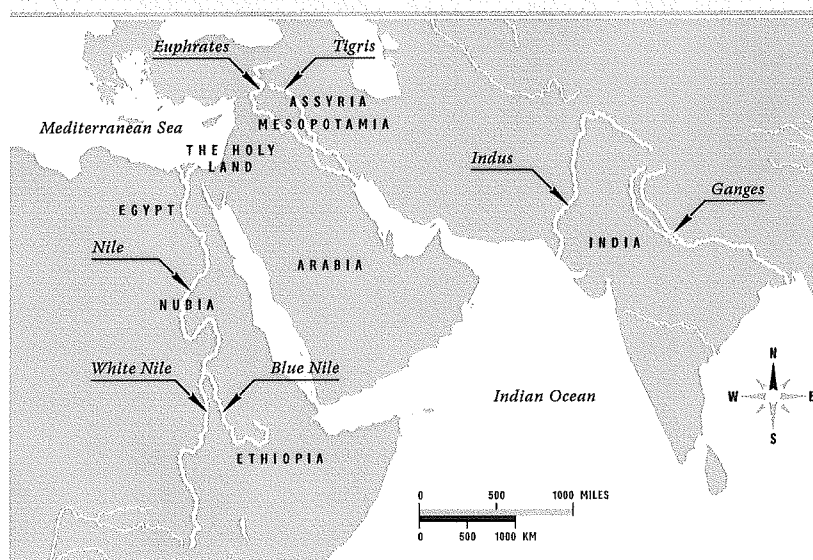


fig. 5: RIVERS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD