5786 - Genesis 1-6 - B'reishit (In the beginning)

Genesis 1:26-31

[26]Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." [27]So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. [28]God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." [29]Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. [30]And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. [31]God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

DAY 6[1]

The drama of Creation is moving toward its final act, the production of animate beings whose natural habitat is dry land. The unusual expansiveness of this section, the enhanced formula of approbation (*approval*), and the exceptional use of the definite article with the day number indicate that the narrative is reaching its climax. The section is divided into two parts. Verses 24-25 describe the emergence of the animal kingdom, which is classified according to three categories: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts. The drama then culminates in verses 26-30 with the creation of the human being.

24. ***Let the earth bring forth*** It is uncertain whether the production of animals from earth is a reflex of the concept of "mother earth" or is simply a figurative way of expressing the natural environment of these creatures.

25. The execution of the divine utterance reverses the order of verse 24 so as to juxtapose '***adamah***, "earth," to ***'adam***, "human being," in the next verse.

creeping things A general term for creatures whose bodies appear to move close to the ground. Here it seems to encompass reptiles, creeping insects, and very small animals.

The absence of a blessing upon these categories of animals is striking. It may be that, whereas the natural habitat of fish and fowl allows for their proliferation without encroaching adversely upon man's environment, the proliferation of animals, especially the wild variety, constitutes a menace. This idea is actually expressed in Exodus 23:29 and Leviticus 26:22.

Exodus 23:28-29

[28]I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. [29]But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate **and the wild animals too numerous for you**.

Leviticus 26:21-22

[21]"'If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. [22]**I will send wild animals against you**, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

26. The second section of the sixth day culminates the creative process. **A human being is the pinnacle of Creation**. This unique status is communicated in a variety of ways, **not least by the simple fact that humankind is last in a manifestly ascending, gradational order**. The creation of human life is an exception to the rule of creation by divine fiat, as signaled by the replacement of the simple impersonal Hebrew command (the jussive[2]) with a personal, strongly expressed resolve (the cohortative[3]). The divine intent and purpose are solemnly declared in advance, and the stereotyped formula "and it was so" gives way to a thrice-repeated avowal that God created the man, using the significant verb *b-r'*. **Human beings are to enjoy a unique relationship to God, who communicates with them alone and who shares with them the custody and administration of the world**.

At the same time, the pairing of the creation of man in this verse with that of land animals, and their sharing in common a vegetarian diet, focuses attention on the dual nature of humankind, the creatureliness and earthiness as well as the Godlike qualities. The mysterious duality of man—the awesome power at his command and the starkness of his utter insignificance as compared with God-is the subject of the psalmist who, basing himself on the present narrative, exclaims: "When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, / the moon and stars that You set in place, / what is man that You have been mindful of him, / mortal man that You have taken note of him, / that You have made him little less than

1 Nahum M. Sarna, Gen. Ed., *The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis*, (The Jewish Publication Society), pp. 11-14.

2 The term *jussive* refers to a word, form, case, or mood expressing command.

3 The term *cohortative* refers to a grammatical mood or verb form that expresses exhortation or encouragement. It is used to convey a sense of plea, insistence, or self-encouragement, typically in the first person. In essence, it allows the speaker to express a desire or intent to perform an action together with others.

divine, / and adorned him with glory and majesty;/ You have made him master over Your handiwork,/ laying the world at his feet" (Pss. 8:4-7).

Let us make The extraordinary use of the first person plural evokes the image of a heavenly court in which God is surrounded by His angelic host.[20] Such a celestial scene is depicted in several biblical passages. This is the Israelite version of the polytheistic assemblies of the pantheon-monotheized and depaganized. It is noteworthy that this plural form of divine address is employed in Genesis on two other occasions, both involving the fate of humanity: in 3:22, in connection with the expulsion from Eden; and in 11:7, in reference to the dispersal of the human race after the building of the Tower of Babel.

man Hebrew ***'adam*** is a generic term for humankind; it never appears in Hebrew in the feminine or plural. **In the first five chapters of Gencsis it is only rarely a proper name, Adam. The term encompasscs both man and woman, as shown in verses 27-28 and 5:1-2, where it is construed with plural verbs and terminations.**[21]

In our image, after our likeness This unique combination of expressions, virtually identical in meaning, emphasizes the incomparable nature of human beings and their special relationship to God. The full import of these terms can be grasped only within the broader context of biblical literature and against the background of ancient Near Eastern analogues.

The continuation of verse 26 establishes an evident connection between resemblance to God and sovereignty over the earth's resources, though it is not made clear whether man has power over nature as a result of his being like God or whether that power constitutes the very essence of the similarity. A parallel passage in 9:6-7 tells of God's renewed blessing on the human race after the Flood and declares murder to be the consummate crime precisely because "in His image did God make man." In other words, **the resemblance of man to God bespeaks the infinite worth of a human being and affirms the inviolability of the human person.** The killing of any other creature, even wantonly, is not murder. Only a human being may be murdered. It would seem, then, that the phrase "in the image of God" conveys something about the nature of the human being as opposed to the animal kingdom; it also asserts human dominance over nature. But it is even more than this.

The words used here to convey these ideas can be better understood in the light of a phenomenon registered in both Mesopotamia and Egypt, whereby the ruling monarch is described as "the image" or "the likeness" of a god. In Mesopotamia we find the following salutations: "The father of my lord the king is the very image of Bel (*salam bel*) and the king, my lord, is the very image of Bel"; "The king, lord of the lands, is the image of Shamash"; "O king of the inhabited world, you are the image of Marduk." In Egypt the same concept is expressed through the name Tutankhamen (Tutankh-amun), which means "the living image of (the god) Amun," and in the designation of Thutmose IV as "the likeness of Re."

Without doubt, the terminology employed in Genesis 2:26 is derived from regal vocabulary, which serves to elevate the king above the ordinary run of men. **In the Bible this idea has become democratized. All human beings are created "in the image of God"; each person bears the stamp of royalty.** This was patently understood by the author of Psalm 8, cited above. His description of man in royal terms is his interpretation of the concept of the "image of God" introduced in verse 26. It should be further pointed out that in Assyrian royal steles, the gods are generally depicted by their symbols: Ashshur by the winged disk, Shamash by the sun disk, and so forth. These depictions are called: "the image (*salam*) of the great gods." In light of this, the characterization of man as "in the image of God" furnishes the added dimension of his being the symbol of God's presence on earth. While he is not divine, **his very existence bears witness to the activity of God in the life of the world.** This awareness inevitably entails an awesome responsibility and imposes a code of living that conforms with the consciousness of that fact.

It should be added that the pairing of the terms *tselem* and *demut*, "image" and "likeness," is paralleled in a ninth-century B.C.E. Assyrian-Aramaic bilingual inscription on a statue at Tell Fekheriyeh in Syria. **The two terms are used interchangeably and indiscriminately and obviously cannot be used as criteria for source differentiation.**

They shall rule The verbs used here and in verse 28 express the coercive power of the monarch, consonant with the explanation just given for "the image of God." **This power, however, cannot include the license to exploit nature banefully (destructively),** for the following reasons: the human race is not inherently sovereign, but enjoys its dominion solely by the grace of God. Furthermore, the model of kingship here presupposed is Israelite, according to which, **the monarch does not possess unrestrained power and authority; the limits of his rule are carefully defined and circumscribed by divine law, so that kingship is to be exercised with responsibility and is subject to accountability.** Moreover, man, the sovereign of nature, is conceived at this stage to be functioning within the context of a "very good" world in which the interrelationships of organisms with their environment and with each other are entirely harmonious and mutually beneficial, an idyllic situation that is clearly illustrated in Isaiah's vision of the ideal future king (Isa. I1:1-9). Thus, despite the power given him, man still requires special divine sanction to partake of the earth's vegetation, and **although he "rules" the animal world, he is not here permitted to eat flesh** (vv. 29-30; cf. 9:3-4).

There is one other aspect to the divine charge to man. Contrary to the common beliefs of the ancient world that the forces of nature are divini-

ties that may hold the human race in (bondage), our text declares man to be a free agent who has the God-given power to control nature.

27. ***male and female He created them*** **No such sexual differentiation is noted in regard to animals**. Human sexuality is of a wholly different order from that of the beast. The next verse shows it to be a blessed gift of God woven into the fabric of life. **As such, it cannot of itself be other than wholesome**. By the same token, **its abuse is treated in the Bible with particular severity**. Its proper regulation is subsumed under the category of the holy, whereas **sexual perversion is viewed with abhorrence as an affront to human dignity and as a desecration of the divine image in man**.

The definition of the human community contained in this verse is solemnly repeated in 5:1-2, an indication of its seminal importance. **Both sexes are created on the sixth day by the hand of the one God; both are made in His image" ON A LEVEL OF ABSOLUTE EQUALITY BEFORE HIM**. Thus the concept of **humanity needs both male and female for its proper articulation**.

It is noteworthy that the recurrent formula "of every kind," hitherto encountered with the emergence of every living thing, is here omitted. **There is only one human species**. The notion of all humankind deriving from one common ancestry directly leads to the recognition of the unity of the human race, notwithstanding the infinite diversity of human culture. The sages of the Mishnah, in Sanhedrin 4:5, observed that **mankind was created as a single unit in order to inculcate the idea that the destruction of a single life is tantamount to the destruction of the entire world and, conversely, the preservation of a single life is the preservation of the entire world**. The sages further understood that God, in order to promote social harmony, intended that **no person have claim to unique ancestry as a pretext for asserting superiority over others**.

28. ***God blessed them and God said to them*** The difference between the formulation here and Gods blessing to the fish and fowl in verse 22 is subtle and meaningful. Here God directly addresses man and woman. The transcendent God of Creation transforms Himself into the immanent God, the personal God, who enters into unmediated communion with human beings.

Be fertile and increase Some commentators have understood this blessing of fertility to encompass a religious duty of procreation as well.(23) However, only in its repetition in 9:7, following the depopulation of the earth by the Flood, is it clearly prescriptive.(24)

30. God makes provision for the sustenance of man and beast—a reminder that man is still a creature totally dependent on the benevolence of God. The narrative presupposes a pristine state of vegetarianism. Isaiah's vision of the ideal future in 11:7 and 65:25 see the carnivorous animals becoming herbivorous.

very good A verdict on the totality of Creation, now completed.

the sixth day... The exceptional definite article here and with the seventh day points to the special character of these days within the scheme of Creation.

(20) For the celestial court, cf. 1Kings 22:19-22; Isa. 6:8; Ps. 29:1-2; 82; 89:6-7; Job 1:6; 2:1. In Job 38:7, divine beings are present at creation. The present interpretation is found in Gen. R. 8:3; Rashi.

(21) Adam is a proper noun in 2:20; 3:17, 21; 4:25; 5:3-S. In Ugar., too, '*adm* is "humankind." In Phoen., plural '*dmm*, "persons," occurs.

(23) For the imperative used in blessing, cf. Gen. 24:60; Exod. 4:18; Deut. 33:18. In Gen. 9:2, 7, only Noah and his sons, not the women, are addressed. See Mish. Yev. 6:6, Yev. 12b, Tosef. Yev. 8:4, Gen. R 8:14. See D. Daube, The Duty of Procreation(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 197).

(24) On Gen. 9:I-4, see Sanh. 59b.

1. **Let us make** *The extraordinary use of the first person plural evokes the image of a heavenly court in which God is surrounded by His angelic host.*

a. Genesis 1:26 (PJE)

[26]And the Lord **said to the angels who ministered before Him**, who had been created in the second day of the creation of the world, Let **US** make man in Our image, in Our likeness; and let **them** rule over the fish of the sea ...

b. Genesis 3:22

[22]And the LORD God said, "**The man has now become like one of US**, knowing good and evil ...

c. Genesis 11:6-8

[6]The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. [7]Come, **let US go down** and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." [8]So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

d. Isaiah 6:6-8

[6]Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7]With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." [8]Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And **who will go for US?**" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

e. Psalm 29:1-2

[1]A psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, **you heavenly beings**, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. [2]Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

f. Psalm 82:1-8

[1]A psalm of Asaph[4]. God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment **among the "gods"**: [2]"How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? [3]Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. [4]Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. [5]"The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. [6]"I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' [7]But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler." [8]Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

g. Genesis Rabba VIII:3

3. AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN, etc. With whom did He take counsel?(1) R. Joshua b. Levi said: He took counsel with the works of heaven and earth, like a king who had two advisers without whose knowledge(2) he did nothing whatsoever. R. Samuel b. Nahman said: He took counsel with the works of each day, like a king who had an associate without whose knowledge he did nothing.

(1) This question arises because of the phrase LET **US** MAKE.
(2) The Hebrew implies knowledge and consent.

h. Some believe that in Genesis 1:26 God refers to Himself and includes the heavenly assembly of angels, as in Job 1:6; 1 Kings 22:19–20; and Psalm 89:5. However, this theory falls apart because nowhere in Scripture does God say that the angels are made in His image or likeness. Another hypothesis suggests that the plural form is used to convey dignity and splendor, a language device called “plural of majesty.” Others chalk up the plural language to a technique known as “plural of deliberation,” used when a speaker consults with himself as the Lord does in Isaiah 6:8: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’”[5]

The conviction of the early church fathers was that Elohim’s statement, “Let Us make man in Our image,” **communicates a complex and unified expression of the Trinity**. The doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is One in three Persons: God the Father; God the Son, (Yeshua the Messiah) our Savior; and God the Holy Spirit. Here in Genesis 1:26, the “Us” and “Our” indicate God the Father speaking in the fullness of His divine creative power to the Son and the Holy Spirit. A similar conversation among the Godhead is seen in Genesis 3:22: “And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.’”

4 Asaph was a Levite, one of the leaders of David’s choir.
5 https://www.gotquestions.org/let-Us-make-man-in-Our-image.html

1) *Do the Church Fathers have the authority to determine what the text of the Hebrew Bible means? It is after all Jewish literature—not Christian literature.*

2. ***Human beings are to enjoy a unique relationship to God, who communicates with them alone and who shares with them the custody and administration of the world.***

a. 1Corinthians 3:5-9 (cf. 2Cor 6:1)

[5]What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. [6]I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow ... [8]The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. [9]For **we are co-workers in God's service**; you are God's field, God's building.

b. Luke 22:24-27

[24]A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. [25]Yeshua said to them, "**The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them**; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. [26]But **you are not to be like that**. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. [27]For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

3. *While (man) is not divine, **his very existence bears witness to the activity of God in the life of the world**. This awareness inevitably entails an awesome responsibility **and imposes a code of living that conforms with the consciousness of that fact**.*

a. The seven Noahide laws given to all mankind (Gen 9)

b. The Instructions given to the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai (Exo 20)

c. 1John 5:3

In fact, **this is love for God: to keep his commands**. And his commands are not burdensome ...

4. ***Both sexes are created on the sixth day by the hand of the one God; both are made in His image" ON A LEVEL OF ABSOLUTE EQUALITY BEFORE HIM**. Thus the con*cept of **humanity needs both male and female for its proper articulation**.

a. Salimbene,[6] *A Collection of Views on Women*

“**Woman was evil from the beginning**, a gate of death, a disciple of

6 Salimbene di Adam or Salimbene of Parma (9 October 1221–c. 1290), was an Italian Franciscan friar and chronicler who is an important source for Italian history of the 13th century.

the serpent, the devil's accomplice, a fount of deception, a dogstart to godly labors, rust corrupting the saints; whose perilous face hath over overgrown such as had already become almost angels. Lo, woman is the head of sin, a weapon of the devil, expulsion from Paradise, mother of guilt, corruption of the ancient law."[7]

b. Tertullian,[8] *On the Apparel of Women 1.1*

"Do you not know that you are (each) and Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway: You are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die."[9]

c. St. Augustine,[10] *Literal Commentary on Genesis, IX.5*

"What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman … **I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children.**"[11]

1) "If it were not the case that the woman was created to be man's helper specifically for the production of children, then why would she have been created as a "helper"? Was it so that she might work the land with him? No … **a male would have made a better assistant**. One can also posit that the reason for her creation as a helper had to do with the companionship, she could provide for the man … Yet for company and conversation, how much more agreeable it is for two male friends to dwell together than for a man and a woman! … **I cannot think of any reason for woman's being made as man's helper if we dismiss the reason of procreation.**"[12]

2) "That a man endowed with a spiritual mind could have believed this [the lie of the serpent] is astonishing. And just because it is impossible to believe it, woman was given to man, **woman who was of small intelligence** and who perhaps still lives more in accordance with the promptings of the inferior flesh than by the superior reason."[13]

d. Thomas Aquinas,[14] *Summa Theologica, The Production of the Woman, Reply to Objection 1*

"As regards the individual nature, **woman is defective and misbegotten**, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist, as the Philosopher observes (De Gener. Animal. iv, 2)."[15]

e. John Knox,[16] *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*

"**To promote a woman to bear rule**, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, **is repugnant to nature; (an insult) to God**, a thing most contrary to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice."[17]

"First, I say, that **woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man**, not to rule and command him …

7 Salimbene, quoted in G.G. Coulton, From St. Francis to Dante: A Translation of All that is of Primary Interest in the Chronicle of the Franciscan Salimbene, (Nutt, 1906), pp. 91-2, in Carroll D. Osburn, Ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Vol. 2,* (College Press, 1995), p. 419.

8 Tertullian (c. CE 160–225), the Father of Latin theology. Born at Carthage the son of a centurion and brought up as a pagan, receiving a good literary and rhetorical education, he was converted to Christianity before 197. He was learned in philosophy and science, and especially in law, and was the author of many apologetic, theological, controversial, and ascetic works.

9 Carrol D. Osburn (Ed.), *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Vol. 2* (College Press Publishing, 1995), p. 411.

10 Augustine (CE 354–430), was born in a Roman province and educated at Carthage. As a young man he became interested in philosophy, with little interest in Christianity until a religious experience in his early thirties. By 396 he had become bishop of Hippo, and his sermons and writings gained fame, notably his *Confessions* and the treatise *City of God.* His notions of God's grace, free will and Original Sin had a great influence on Christian theology.

11 http://jamalashley.wordpress.com/2007/05/13/eve-the-mother-of-all-the-living/

12 As quoted in Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (The Liturgical Press, 1983), pp. 28-29.

13 Ibid., p. 40.

14 Thomas Aquinas, (b. circa 1225), best known as a Medieval Catholic scholar who wrote *Summa Theologica.* He was a priest, professor, theologian and philosopher who influenced centuries of religious and academic thought with his methodical way of harmonizing faith and reason.

15 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.pdf?membership_type=733bab2a7aa14318453cd34edd59090b2f9d142c

16 John Knox (ca. 1505-1572) as a Scottish reformer, was one of the most celebrated followers of John Calvin and became the chief force in the introduction and establishment of the Presbyterian form of Calvinism in Scotland.

17 *The First Blast of the Trumpet* is, perhaps, Knox's most famous and controversial work. In the twentieth century, few people have read the book, and still fewer have made an attempt to understand the reformer's position. For Knox, the teaching of scripture alone is sufficient to prove that women should not bear rule over men. The testimony of scripture is so plain, he wrote, that "to add anything were superfluous …" (http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/ firblast.htm).