

**I Am What I Am
and That Ain't All That I am
Bogrim Nesiya
July 17-19, 2000**

It is said in Torah that human beings are created in the image of God. "And God created the 'Adam' in his image, in the image of God God created him, male and female God created them." Breishit 1:27 The idea that one is created in the image of something or someone else is complex and raises many questions. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? To be created in the image of something might also imply intention as to the future of that which is created.

Our lives are filled with images of what we should be, what we want to be, what we expect, and what others want us to be. These images help us make decisions. Because of our own images of what our futures might look like we make decisions that will bring us closer to that future.

Think about your relationship to your "Creator." Whether it be your parent, your teacher, sibling, or all of the above, think about who you are because of that person who helped to create the person you are. Now think about the people you are like. What responsibilities might being like someone, or being identified as being like someone, arise. What are your responsibilities to that person or being of any sort, in terms of relation directly to them, and what are your responsibilities as a representative of them and their work?

Chevritta Questions for I Am Who Created Me?

- Leader Instructions:** Split the action group you are working with into two even groups. Each group should form a circle. Give each group a different text from the book of Genesis. **DO NOT** tell them that the groups have different texts. Have each group review the questions here and all the sources. They should discuss the following questions in the small groups. Also, encourage participants to raise other points in the text from Genesis or the sources in the Source book that are interesting to them. After about 15 to 20 minutes of discussion on the Genesis text and other sources, reconvene the large group. Ask participants to share what was discussed in the smaller group. Go through the questions as well as the texts and cover each at least briefly to ensure familiarity for all participants with all the material. After reviewing the material, the participants should begin to notice that they did not all study the same text from Genesis. Reveal the difference officially, again to make sure that all understand what is going on. Now have two volunteers read the two Genesis texts. Discuss the differences in the texts and how those differences affect the answers to the questions. Add more questions to the discussion: How does the way we see ourselves and our responsibilities change depending on which text we learn from? Why does the Torah bring us both texts? Use the sources in the source book to help the discussion. The Mishna and Midrash are both full enough to warrant their own discussions.
1. What place in the world does the human have according to the story you received?
 2. What part does God take in the creation of the humans?

3. Where is the man in relation to all else that is created?
4. Based on your knowledge of the story of creation, and the texts in front of you, what is unique about the creation of humans?
5. How is the human's role in the world affected by your answer to question number four?

Sources for
I Am Who Created Me?

Back and front You have set me and laid upon me Your hand. (**Psalms 139:5**)

Rashi makes an interesting note on "In the Image (lit: shadow) of God created him" (Genesis 1:27) He makes note that "The verse explains for you that the image which is fixed for him (the created being) is the image of his creator's likeness"

And God Said: Let us make man, etc. With whom did He take counsel? 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 he did nothing whatsoever. R. Samual 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. R. Ammi said: He took counsel with His own heart. It may be compared to a king who had a palace built by an architect, but when he saw it it did not please him: with whom is he to be indignant? Surely with the agent! Similarly, "And it grieved Him at His heart." (**Midrash Rabba, Genesis Rabba 8:3**)

Therefore was a single man only [first] created to teach thee that if anyone destroy a single soul from the human race, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed a whole world, and whosoever rescues a single soul from the human race, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a whole world. (And [a single man only was first created] for the sake of peace in the human race, that no man might say to his fellow, 'My ancestor was greater than thy ancestor', and that the heretics should not say, 'There are many powers in heaven', and [only one human being was first created] to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, for man stamps many coins with one die and they are all alike one with the other, but the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be he, has stamped all mankind with the die of the first man and yet not one of them is like to his fellow. Therefore every one is duty bound to say, 'For my sake was the universe created'). (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)

Leader Instructions:

Activity: One in a Kazillion

Give each participant a piece of paper and a few crayons or markers. Have each person fold his or her paper in half and make a clear crease to separate the two sides. Have the participants draw a texture on one half of the paper, making sure to keep the other half clean. Tell participants to make the texture as intricate as the possible can, with as many layers as they can. This should take about ten minutes. If participants say they're done, they should be told to keep drawing until the time is up. Tell participants to draw constantly for the entire time. When time is called, ask participants to share what they see in their drawings. Did the drawing take on a certain life of its own? How did it develop? DO NOT tell participants what the second half of the paper is for. After the short discussion, tell participants to get their crayons and markers again and recreate the texture as best they can on the second half of the sheet. You will receive lots of complaining and "Why didn't you tell us!?" and "You told us to make it as detailed as possible!" Tell them to do their best and recreate the texture. Give about ten minutes to recreate the texture. Come back together and begin a discussion about what went in to recreating as opposed to creating the first texture. If the two images aren't exactly the same, which one needs to be fixed, why? This activity is meant to create an understanding about what it means to create something with a detailed plan, an original that is to be created again. How is this similar to and how does this differ from God's creating us in God's image?

Extra Sources

“Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says ‘Have you ever seen a wild beast or bird that possesses a craft? And none the less they sustain themselves without care, and were they not created to serve me? But I was created to serve my Maker. Does it not follow that I should receive my maintenance without care? But I have performed my actions in evil and have forgone my support [and I have forfeited my right to support].’”

(Mishna Kiddushin 4:14)

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said, If there be no [study of the] Law there is no good conduct, if there is no good conduct, if there be no good conduct there is no [study of the] Law; if there be no wisdom there is no fear [of God], if there be no fear [of God] there is no wisdom; if there be no understanding there is no knowledge, if there be no knowledge there is no understanding; If there be no flour there is no Torah, if there is no Torah there is no flour. (Mishna Avot 3:21)

He used to say, all who’s wisdom is greater than his deeds, to what is he similar? To a tree who’s branches are many, and who’s roots are few, and the wind comes and uproots and overturns it on to its face, as it is said: (Jeremiah 17:6) “For he shall be like a juniper tree in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.” But all who’s works are greater than her wisdom, to what is he similar? To a tree who’s branches are few, and who’s roots are many, that even if all the winds that are in the world come and blow on it, there is no moving it from its place. As it is said: (Jeremiah 17:8) “And she shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but its foliage shall be green; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, nei-

ther shall it cease from yielding fruit.” (Mishna Avot 3:22)

He who buys grain in the market, to what is he similar? To a child who is cut off from his mother, and although it is taken to homes of wet nurses it is not satisfied. And he who buys bread in the market, to what is he compared? To a man who digs his own grave - a wretched, precarious existence. But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother’s breast. (Avot d’Rabbi Natan 30:6/29a)

... the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there were no people to till the soil... (Genesis 2:5)

Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai said:

Three things are equal in importance: earth, Humans, and rain. Rabbi Levi said: And these three each consist of three letters (in Hebrew), to teach that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, earth cannot endure; while without either, humans cannot exist. (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 13.3)

Two men were sailing on a boat when one of them began taking animal skins out of his bag to let them dry. The skins stank and the second man asked the first to put the skins away. The first answered, “What I do at my own seat is not your business.” The second man thought for a moment and then took out a carpenter’s drill. He began drilling a hole under his seat. The first man jumped up and said, “Are you crazy? You’re going to kill us.” The second man replied, “What I do at my own seat is not your business.” (Adapted from Leviticus Rabbah 4:6 by Shomrei Adamah)

Glossary

Tikkun Olam: Hebrew phrase meaning fixing the World.

In 16th century T'sefar, Rabbi Isaac Luria observed that in his world, like ours, many things seemed to be wrong. People suffered from hunger, disease, hatred, and war. "How could God allow such terrible things to happen?" wondered Luria. "perhaps," he suggested, "it is because God needs our help." he explained his answer with a mystical story.

When first setting out to make the world, got planned to pour a Holy Light into everything in order to make it real. Guards prepared vessels to contain the Holy Light. But something went wrong. The light was so bright that the vessels burst, shattering into millions of broken pieces like dishes dropped on the floor. The Hebrew phrase which Luria used for this "breaking of the vessels" is sh'virat ha-kaylim.

Our world is a mess because it is filled with broken fragments. When people fight and hurt one another, they allow the world to remain shattered. The same can be said of people who have pantries filled with food and let others starve. According to Luria, we who live in a cosmic heap of broken pieces, and God cannot repair it alone.

That is why God created us and gave us freedom of choice. We are free to do whatever we pleased with our world. We cannot allow all things to remain broken or, as Luria urged, we can try to repair the mess. Luria's Hebrew phrase for "repairing the world" is tikkun olam. ("Repairing the World" from Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Miracles*, p. 47)

Bal Tashchit: Hebrew phrase meaning do not destroy. It is a law from the Torah. It is a negative commandant, a commandment of what not to do. This law prohibits needlessly destroying or wasting resources, including a person's own property.

"When you lay siege and battle against a city for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only a tree which you know does not

yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been captured." (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)

Psolet: Hebrew word meaning waste.

Habitat: The physical place where a plant or animal can find the right food, shelter, water, temperature, and other things it needs for life.

8

9