

A Fitting Counterpart Text Study in Genesis

Genesis 1: 24-29

God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” It was so. God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. God said, “Let us make humankind **in our image, after our likeness (1)**. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” God created humankind in the divine image, creating it in the image of God— creating them male and female. God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, **fill the earth and master it; and rule** the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” It was so. Thus God saw all that had been made, and found it very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2: 4-25

Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When God ה' made earth and heaven— when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because God ה' had not sent rain upon the earth and there were no human beings to till the soil, but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth. God ה' formed the Human from the soil's humus, **blowing into his nostrils the breath of life:** the Human became a living being (2). God ה' planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the Human who had been fashioned. And from the ground God ה' caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.

A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon, the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where the gold is. The gold of that land is good; bdellium is there, and lapis lazuli. The name of the second river is Gihon, the one that winds through the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, the one that flows east of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

God ה' settled the Human in the garden of Eden, **to till it and tend it**. God ה' commanded the Human, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.”

God ה' said, “**It is not good for the Human to be alone; I will make a fitting counterpart for him.**” (3) God ה' formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the Human to see what he would call them; and whatever the Human called each

living creature, that would be its name. The Human gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but no fitting counterpart for a human being was found. So God ה' cast a deep sleep upon the Human; and, while he slept, He took one of his *sides* and closed up the flesh at that site. God ה' fashioned the side that had been taken from the Human into a woman, bringing her to the man. Then the man said, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, for from a Human was she taken." **Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh. (4)** The two of them were naked, the Human and his wife, yet they felt no shame.

The following sources are all early Rabbinic texts, compiled around 3C. C.E.

(1) Genesis Rabbah 5:5

Rabbi Simon taught: At the moment when The Holy One wanted to create the human, the angels took sides. Some said, 'Let man not be created', while others said 'Let man be created'. Thus the verse: 'Kindness and Truth met; Righteousness and Peace kissed (Psalms 85)'. Kindness said: "Let man be created, for he will do kindness". Truth said: "NO, for he is all lies". Righteousness said: "Let man be created, for he will do righteous acts". Peace said "NO, for man will always fight". What did The Holy One do? He took Truth and cast it down to the earth. And so the verse says: "He cast down Truth to the earth (Daniel 8) ". The angels said to The Holy One: "Master of the World! How can you disgrace your crown jewel?" To which Hashem replied: "Let Truth arise from the earth", as it is written "Truth will grow from the earth (Psalms 85)".

(2) Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

To tell of the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be He: When a person stamps several coins with one seal, they are all similar to each other. But the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, stamped all people with the seal of Adam the first man, as all of them are his offspring, and not one of them is similar to another. Therefore, since all humanity descends from one person, each and every person is obligated to say: The world was created for me, as one person can be the source of all humanity, and recognize the significance of his actions.

(3) Gen. Rabbah 17

And Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "I will make him a helpmate for him [*fitting counterpart*]" (Genesis 2:18)? If one is worthy his wife helps him; if he is not worthy she is against him.

(4) Avot 5:10

There are four types of character in human beings: One that says: "mine is mine, and yours is yours": this is a commonplace type; and some say this is a sodom-type of character. [One that says:] "mine is yours and yours is mine": is an unlearned person (am ha'aretz); [One that says:] "mine is yours and yours is yours" is a pious person. [One that says:] "mine is mine, and yours is mine" is a wicked person.