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A REINVESTIGATION OF “THE CREATION OF WOMAN” FROM A HEBRAIC VIEWPOINT

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Synopsis:

This paper looks at the role of women in society and the church and investigates the original creation story in Hebrew without the sociological intervention, and gross misinterpretation of the text, by modern man so often used to show the “superiority” of men because of the “after thought” in the creation of woman. Because of the misinterpretation of ideas and words, such as submissive and helpmeet used in the Biblical text, many men claim “superiority” over women in a spiritual sense when nothing is further from the truth.

A reinvestigation of “The Creation of Woman” from a Hebraic Viewpoint

By Barry Fike

There are many attitudes constantly developing in the body of Christ today; a large variety of such are only revivals of old attitudes and theological considerations that have been wholesale bought into without question. Many continue to walk lock-step with the evaluations and conclusions of their fore-fathers while never questioning their positions. Not surprisingly, we continue to have the same problems that we’ve always had in the area of women: their role in the church, in marriage, in society, etc.

In the midst of our “modern culture” there seems to be nervousness, a paranoid spirit pervading on the side of both men and women coming out of the context of chauvinism which was an important topic in the 1960’s. It was in that era that it quickly became apparent that anyone over the age of thirty didn’t know anything. The teenage chauvinists pushed the attitude that we (youth) are superior to you (the establishment) because you are who you are; you are inferior, and we look down on you with contempt. Words like “chauvinist” and “pig” became bywords for those whom the activists looked upon as unyielding authoritarian figures that hadn’t been enlightened. While used a great deal in the sixties, the word “chauvinist” actually comes by way of France from a man by the name of Nicolas Cauvin, who was a great admirer of Napoleon; he thought that the French were the only people worth being, and that

Napoleon was god. He was notorious for his bellicose attachment to the lost imperial cause.¹ From him we get a word that today is defined as: “unreasoning devotion to one’s race, sex, etc. with contempt for other races, the opposite sex...”² We suddenly became aware that among us lived chauvinists that were racial, sexual, religious, and cultural; however, it became more a part of our vocabulary in reference to men; male chauvinism loomed larger in the entire scene, in America, and thus the word became attached more to them, though the word can obviously have a variety of meanings and associations.

The word has also has religious connotations that have been used constantly in a variety of circumstances when interpreting the Biblical text. When the Bible describes woman as the weaker vessel a male chauvinist sees the opportunity, with presumably a divine mandate, and begins to “dominate” woman with a “thus saith the Lord”. As many young men physically, and mentally, “mature” they can began to bully women because of their “superiority”. Some girls were impressed by that and married them until they began to recognize it for what it really was; they weren’t impressed anymore. It moved from bullying to a put- down – she’s inferior because she’s weaker; yet, Simon Peter says that she receives special honor. If she were weaker to man in every way, she’d be a liability not an asset. Didn’t God say that he would make a helpmeet for man like the Holy Spirit is one who assists every believer? Christ is my helper. Is that a put down? She supplies something that man needs, so without her he’s a weaker person. As sad as this misguided concept of “male superiority” is, if

¹ *Webster’s New World Dictionary*. Second College Edition, Guralnik, David B. Ed. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1984, 244.

² *Ibid.*

it stayed only in mainstream America one might say that it was solely a cultural phenomenon and thus curable. Unfortunately, it is from this “chauvinistic” idea, that man is “over the woman” and “superior to her” that a great deal of present day theology is wrapped around.

But this was only the most recent social adherence to this doctrine of “male superiority”. It has indeed been a part of civilization since the beginning of mankind and the society that was its natural outgrowth. Where did it all begin? Let’s look and see if we can recreate a possible scenario which allows us to begin our journey in a detailed and logical sense of the place of woman in the mind of God.

One doesn’t need to go too far within the Biblical record to realize one striking fact: women in the Bible are strong, active, bold, fearless, and assertive. Take, for example, the first women in the biblical text. In Genesis Eve is described by active verbs such as “said,” “saw,” “took,” “ate” and “gave” (Gen. 3:2-6). Adam is the subject of only one verb: “he ate” (Gen. 3:6). Some might say that man (adam) hasn’t gone too far from that first verb even in today’s modern society. Interestingly enough, if the biblical record is looked at this pattern continues until the end of the Bible. It is the book of Ruth (not Boaz), the book of Esther (not Mordecai), and a dominant female voice leads the reader through the sensual poetry of the Song of Solomon. Yael will drive a tent peg through the temple of the Canaanite general Sisera (Judges 4,5), and Rahab will save the two spies from Israel by hiding them on her roof and convincing the king’s men that the spies have already left the city and returned to their camp. Not sociologically flattering to Israel we find that Yael and Rahab weren’t Israelite but pagans. Yael was part of the tent-dwelling Kenites (a desert group recently settled or in the process of

settling down in the land of Canaan) while Rahab is simply described as a non-Israelite whore.³ The word for “prostitute” can mean a “cult prostitute” which may have ramifications to her being a royal aristocrat. Whatever the exact meaning of this word (which goes beyond the scope of this study) one thing is for sure—whether the women were Israelite, or outside the realm of this nation, we don’t see weak, limp wristed, cowardly, spiritually unadventurous women struggling in the shadow of a man to find their meaning and purpose.

To truly get the meaning of just how much women were a part of the plan of God from the conception of mankind, we have to go back to the book of Genesis. Few have gone back to the very beginning and seriously taken a look as to how God created man and woman and how this set up the original pattern to be followed by mankind as they continued to develop into societies and nations. When you go back to the original Hebrew text a different concept is given that the “chauvinists” haven’t understood. Hebrew is a language in which everything has gender: everything! It is a gender-charged, sexually potent language, in which every noun, expressing every person, place, or thing, is either male or female. A table, a chair, a window are all masculine. A hand, a foot, and a shoe are all feminine. Contrast that potency with English in which nouns are quite genderless. English has no masculine or feminine adjectives.⁴ What happens when you transition from a language, in which everything has gender, to a language where the concept isn’t even translatable? Misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misguided theology are the natural result of poor study, and a continual zealous adherence to church history that almost seems as if it were inspired by God.

³ Rendsburg, Gary A. “Unlikely Heroes.” *Bible Review*, February 2003: 17, 18. Print.

⁴ Hanson, Ken, Ph.D., “The Feminine Side of God”. *Yavo Digest*, Vol. 8, No. 3: 13. Print.

If the body of Christ is to operate in a manner that pleases God, it behooves us to read carefully the sacred text in its original language, allowing it to speak, rendering us silent as we contemplate upon the concepts that will be developed in this opening chapter. Read it thoughtfully and prayerfully as Gods spirit guides and directs your heart and mind to reconsider who woman truly is.

When the subject of women, and their “subservient” role in the church, comes up it is imperative that we trace this feeling back to its original beginnings. Most people would turn to 1 Corinthians 11, 14 or Ephesians 5, and speak about those scriptures that instruct the woman to be silent. However, if one’s desire is to understand where many preconceived notions of the superiority of man over woman begin, they must go back literally to the beginning and see what happens in the creation story of man and woman. To do this one must return to the Hebrew Scriptures and to those who have studied them for thousands of years: the Jews.

Those who are familiar with Judaism and Jewish Law are aware that women have always been held in the highest regard; in no way, during any period of time, were women ever considered to be inferior to men. Because of woman's role as wife, mother, and homemaker, her sphere of activity is different from mans, but no less important to the community of God.

Because of a basic misunderstanding of this Hebrew foundation of the Christian faith, too many Christian leaders have read the New Testament, found seemingly damaging passages relative to the function of women in the home and church, and then have taken these passages out of context--bringing them into our 20th century Western world and applying them in a way that not only shows a poor hermeneutic but a complete misunderstanding of the original

language and culture in which they were originally couched. In order to correctly understand the role of women in the Church of the first century, it is imperative that we project ourselves back into that historical and cultural context, asking, "To whom was the author writing, why was he writing, and do his words have any practical application for the Church today?"⁵

We read in Genesis 1:27:

“And God created man [Adam] in His image, in the image of God did He create him, male and female He created them.”

If one carelessly wanders over this passage in its English verbiage, giving it little thought, great harm is done to properly understand this magnificent creation of God; nevertheless, when carefully considered, this passage exposes great truth about the wonder of this creation, and we see surfacing a different dimension to the creation story than we have ever noticed before.

Since English has no masculine or feminine adjectives, for us to understand the very creation that God instigated as involving both male and female elements, we have to go back to the Hebrew language in which the text was originally written. In Hebrew the word “man” is the word “Adam” which, interestingly enough, is the name of the first created being. Actually, it is a shortened form of the word Adamah, which means “ground” or “earth”, from which Adam was created. When it comes to the creation of man, it’s interesting that, according to the text, God created man from “the dust of the ground.” The Hebrew word for “dust” (aphar) is

⁵ Roy B. Blizzard, Jr., Ph.D. “The Role of Women in First-Century Judaism and the Church”. 9 January 2004 <http://www.biblescholars.org/main.php>. Internet.

masculine, while the word for “ground” (adamah) is feminine. Contrast this sexual potency with English, in which nouns are quite genderless and you have a shocking contrast that aids our misunderstanding of man from the very beginning. Also, consider the idea that this Adam, this person, was to be a reflection of everything that God is, and since God is both male and female, with masculine as well as feminine attributes, so is Adam, the human being, both male and female.⁶

The medieval kabbalists (A study in Judaism which studies a set of esoteric teachings meant to explain the relationship between an infinite, eternal and mysterious Creator and the finite and mortal universe of His creation) believed that God's self could not be understood, but God had revealed attributes that interact with each other and the world. These beliefs are known as sefirot. Just as human beings are made up of various internal traits or tendencies of personality, all of which interact with one another, so too God is made up of various internal traits or "drives." The imagery used to describe the sefirot and their relationships is often visual and physical, even sexual.⁷ If it is probable that God has various internal traits or “drives”, then it makes sense that any creation that was created in the very image of that God would have the same. The Talmud (the collection of Rabbinical legislation and interpretation based on the Torah that developed over the centuries – considered part of their Oral tradition) gives us another interpretation of the sequence of verses relating to the creation of women. It suggests

⁶ Hanson, Ken, Ph.D., “The Feminine Side of God”. *Yavo Digest*, Vol. 8, No. 3: 13, 14. Print.

⁷ Robinson, George, *According to the Kabbalists, the attributes of God relate to each other in a scripted way.* http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/God/The_Middle_Ages/The_Kabbalists_on_God/The_Sefirot.shtml. Internet.

that the first person was a self-sufficient androgynous (genderless) being. Thus, the verse in Genesis tells us: “Male and female He created them,” i.e., the first human being was both male and female.⁸

This is in accordance with another scripture found in Genesis 5:2 where it says: “He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them Adam.”

According to the Midrash, (an early Jewish commentary or interpretation on a Biblical text expounding a point of law or developing or illustrating a moral principle) man was created with two faces – i.e. male and female halves – and afterwards he divided them.⁹ A male with corresponding female parts created he them; Gen. R. s. 8; Makh. Bo, s. 14 (cmp. Gen. R.1.c., beg.).¹⁰ From this textual evidence, therefore, it seems that there is strong textual evidence to consider that in the beginning this “creation” of God, called ADAM, was one human being with both male and female attributes. (answering the question “who is ‘them’ of Gen. 1:27?”) After all, wasn’t this creation a reflection of all that God was? Why wouldn’t this initial creation, made in Gods likeness, have the attributes of both male and female? This point is driven home even more so by the “private name” of God that described the special relationship between the people and their creator. Today, known as the Tetragrammaton, YHWH (as it’s spelled in English) has no sound except with the nouns that we’ve added, thus ending with the name

⁸ Meiselman, Moshe. *Jewish Women in Jewish Law*. New York, KTAV Publishing House , 1978, 9. Print.

⁹ *Bereishis*, Brooklyn, New York, ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, 1988, vol. 1:72. Print.

¹⁰ Jastrow, Marcus. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Brooklyn, New York, P. Shalom Pub. Inc., 1967, vol. 2: 930b. Print.

Yahweh. This name can rightly be understood as containing both genders. It contains two syllables—framed by the letters YH and WH. The YH may be pronounced simply “Yah,” as it is, for example, in the biblical Psalm which states, “Behold, He who rides upon the heavens by His Name, Yah.” (Ps. 68:4) This syllable may be seen as a distinctly male construct—it is the masculine aspect of the Almighty. The second syllable, however, produced by the letters WH, and pronounced “Weh,” “Wah,” or even “Vah,” is a female construct. It contains the feminine essence of God, the womanly side of Deity. The end result is not some kind of mystical dualism; the heart and soul of the Jewish faith is that God is one and only one. Rather, what is depicted in the ineffable Tetragrammaton is a single Deity with both masculine and feminine characteristics. In its essence, this ineffable Name of the Almighty is not masculine, not feminine, not neuter, but equally masculine and feminine.¹¹ If the God from whom we were created is both, even evidenced in his name, is it so farfetched to believe that the single creation that would be the image of God would be both genders also?

Throughout the Biblical text we see that not only does the male but the female side of God occurs not only in his names but also in various scripture. Jesus will use such a motif from the female perspective in Matthew 23:37 when he states: “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (thou) that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under (her) wings, and ye would not!” (KJV) God's wisdom in the Proverbs is personified as that of a female (e.g., Proverbs 1:20, 8:11, 9:1).

¹¹ Hanson, Ken, Ph.D. “The Feminine Side of God”. *Yavo Digest*, Vol. 8, No. 3: 13. Print.

Shekhinah (Hebrew: הַיְכֻסָּה) is the presence or manifestation of God which has descended to "dwell" among humanity. The term never appears in the Hebrew Bible; later rabbis used the word when speaking of God dwelling either in the Tabernacle or amongst the people of Israel (see Exodus 26-28). "And one over them, and a cloud dwelling in their midst (and the cloud, the SHECHINAH which was in the Tent, and the pillar of cloud which moved before them, making low before them the higher (places)...¹² The root of the word means "dwelling". According to the Talmud, the Shekhinah, the Indwelling, is the Divine that resides within the life of the world, dwelling on earth with the Jewish people and going into exile with them when they are exiled. It denotes the manifestation of God upon the stage of the world, although He abides in the far-away heaven.¹³ Of the principal names of God, it is the only one that is of the feminine gender in Hebrew grammar. While the traditional Jewish image of the transcendent God is male, in the kabbalah that image has been accompanied by the feminine image of the Shekhinah—the inner glory of existence. Thus, when reading passages concerning the Shekhinah the following is common: "If man had not succumbed to sin, the Shekhinah might have dispensed with such a covering. As it is, she needs a covering, like a man who must hide his poverty. Thus every sinner may be likened to a man who robs the Shekhinah of her garments; but a man who carries out the commandments of the Torah is as one who clothes the Shekhinah in her garments, who causes her to appear in the earthly world."¹⁴ Translated

¹² Barclay, Joseph, *The Talmud*. London, John Murray, 1878, 357. Print.

¹³ Cohen, A., *Everyman's Talmud*. New York, Schocken Books, 1975, 42. Print.

¹⁴ Scholem, Gershom, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. New York, Schocken Books, 1996, 67. Print.

by Cohen as “Absolute Rest,” Shekhinah refers to the unchanging divine nature.¹⁵¹⁶ The unchanging divine nature, one of the principle names of God, and one that refers to the indwelling, the manifestation of God upon the stage of the world is of feminine gender.

In the name “El Shaddai” it’s shocking to learn that El is actually a Canaanite name for Deity and is the root behind Elohim. It is also quite masculine. But Shaddai is a different sort of word. Behind this word lies the root shad, a word which meant “breast”. Thus, as in the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, we have another name of God that has both masculine and feminine characteristics.¹⁵ In short, this name could be translated “The full-breasted God.” The name El Shaddai means the all-sufficient God, or possibly the God who nourishes and sustains me by suckling me from his breasts. This is a God who nurses the young, who gives succor to the helpless, who sustains all living things. This obviously reflects the female aspect of deity in a very profound way.¹⁷ In several instances it is connected with fruitfulness: "May God Almighty [El Shaddai] bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers..." (Gen. 28:3). "I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]: be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 35:11). "By the Almighty [El Shaddai] who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts [shadayim] and of the womb [racham]" (Gen. 49:25). Again, in referring to a very common usage of one of the name of God, in the biblical text, the reference is highly of feminine usage in the nourishing and sustaining nature of our God. It

¹⁵ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Corrected Edition. Jerusalem, Keter Publishing House, vol. 7, 685. Print.

¹⁶ Hanson, Ken, Ph.D. “The Female Attributes of God.” *Yavo Digest*, vol. 8, no, 3: 14. Print. Blizzard, Dr. Roy, “The Names of God”. *Yavo Digest*, vol. 1, no. 3: 16. Print.

might be helpful to also note that even the rabbis of old spoke of God as a “nurse-maid,” raising up the young.

Dr. Ken Hanson relates that a related feminine aspect of this God of Israel is the term “comforter”. He suggests that the essence of this term shows a feminine characteristic. It is something that a mother feels for her children; it is a way in which the Almighty speaks of the children of Israel. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or fail to have compassion upon him? She may forget; but, lo, I will not. Israel, you are always before Me. Behold, I have engraved my people on the palms of my hands...” (Isa. 49:15). Deuteronomy 32:18 refers to Yahweh as “the God who gave [Israel] birth. Isaiah 42:14 depicts Yahweh “cry[ing] out like a woman in labor.” Isaiah 66:13 speaks of Yahweh providing comfort “as a woman comforts her child.”¹⁷¹⁸ Consider that in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a “comforter,” and spirit, at least in its Hebrew rendering (Ruakh), is a feminine word. In no way is this to be considered as languid, tranquil or soft. The image of the “dove,” so often connected with the Spirit, is, in ancient culture, an image of intensity, of the powerful fluttering of wings, or “hovering” over the primeval waters, of focused “brooding,” as in Genesis 1. The word may be feminine; but the image is of strength, of power, of ancient feminism.¹⁹ One might remember that it is this metaphorical dove upon which the spirit alights upon Jesus after his baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist.

¹⁷ Day, Peggy L. “*Hebrew Bible goddesses And Modern Feminist Scholarship.*” Religious Compass 6.6 (2012):

¹⁸ . Academic Search Complete, Web. 2 Oct. 2014. Print.

¹⁹ Hanson, 14. Print.

²⁰ Hanson, 14. Print.

In addition to “comfort,” there is also the Biblical idea of “mercy,” another female attribute of the Deity, summed up in the verbal root rakham. “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) This is the word for “womb”; therefore, at its heart, true “mercy” is of the womb. It is that element of caring, of nurture, deriving from the bond between mother and child that allows only women know the depths of this mercy. To the extent that God is merciful, God is also feminine—a woman.²⁰

But there is one more attribute of God that appears to be particularly feminine, namely, “wisdom.” The Hebrew word for wisdom, khokhma, is, of course, a feminine noun; and it seems to be almost the exclusive property of women. Consider the classic personification of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, in which God speaks as wisdom and wisdom speaks as God: “Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise HER voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, SHE takes HER stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrance SHE cries aloud...”. And to whom is she crying? “To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.” (Prov. 8:1-5) In our male simplicity, it is prudent to listen to her. When we get down to the nuts and bolts of society and relationships any male has to honestly say that the real wisdom has never been with men. It is of little wonder that God chose the concept of the essence of wisdom to be constructed in a feminine overlay.

It’s only later, when God creates Eve (in Hebrew Hava, meaning the mother of all living), that the female attributes are separated. Yes, this is when the element of wisdom left the male element of Adam—many would say that he’s lacked such ever since. The resultant man feels

that something is missing and longs for its restoration. Judaism teaches that it is for this reason that men experience a great level of sexual longing than women. Judaism also maintains that the Bible itself teaches that man's nature from birth is weaker than a woman's. Look at how many women you can find in a nursing home that, at times, live decades after their husband has died. Widowers often don't fare as well, and, unless they remarry, die off rather quickly after losing a wife.²⁰

Therefore, the concept of God creating Adam with two halves, one masculine and another feminine, has not only internal biblical evidence, as shown in the names of God and various scriptures, but solid grammatical evidence from the very name of Adam himself. To believe that man was solely a creature complete within himself, without the nature of "woman" present, is not only incomprehensible (since man was created in the "image" of God) but dishonest with the original Hebrew text.

"A-dam" wasn't fully content to be as "he" was after having a parade of animals that showed partners that complemented each other, thus something happened within him. Why? For the answer to that we go to the second chapter of Genesis and read in more detail about this creation that God put on earth. In vs. 18, 19 we see that God saw a problem with his creation and decides to make a "helper" to be with Adam. Why create another individual if it is believed, from the original Hebrew and the best of Jewish commentaries, that this original Adam was both man and woman? To begin with, there is no mention of another creation. God is simply going to literally make a helper as in front of him: or a helper against him. Paul says, in

²⁰ Hanson, 15.

1 Corinthians 11:9, that woman was created for man. Though it is usually understood to mean that she was made to serve him, this probably is an allusion to Genesis 2:18, “I will make him a helper fit for him.” Francine Dumas in her work, “Men and Women: Similarity and Difference”, p. 37, noted that ezer (help, succor), and the word used for Eve, in Genesis 2:18, is often used of God, the “helper” of His people (Exodus 18:4; Deut. 33:7; Psalms 27:9; 33:20; 94:17; cf. the use of boethos, the Greek cognate, in Hebrews 13:6). It indicates one who comes to another’s aid, who provides relief from a complaint of a need, and occurs in the Bible sixteen times of a superior, five times of an equal, but never of an inferior. Adam needed someone like him; Eve, derived from his very being, supplied that need as his equal, as himself. Thus, this is a picture of oneness, not of subordination.²¹

“She shall be called “woman” (issah) because she was taken out of “man” (is).

The idiomatic meaning of “bone and flesh” as “equal” retains its force, however alongside the literal meaning. So it is that God made up for the inadequacy of His original creation of man—a inadequacy that He admits to by saying “It is not good for the man to be alone”—by creating the female of the species, who is intended to be ezer knegdo, (rendered in many English translations “a helper fit for him” or “a fitting helper for him”) “a power equal to him.”²²

The sexes are created simultaneously, and one is not elevated above the other;

²¹ Bouldrey, Richard and Joyce. *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul’s view of women* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976) 35.

²² Freedman, R. David, “*Woman, A Power Equal to Man,*” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9 (January-February): 56. Print.

sexuality, a fundamental aspect of the creation, is not evil, nor is either of the two sexes evil because of their gender; and last, but not least, woman and man are both created in the image and likeness of their creator. This is manifest by their being given dominion over the rest of creation—they share equal authority since both are created in the image of G-d.²³

“A helper against him”: If man is worthy, the woman will be “a helper”; if he proves to be unworthy, she shall be against him”. Man and woman represent two opposites, who, if they are worthy, merge into a unified whole...but when they are not worthy the very fact that they are opposites causes her to be “against him”. A wife is neither man’s shadow nor his servant, but his other self, a “helper” in a dimension beyond the capability of any other creature.²⁴

In verse nineteen we read that God brought to Adam all the animals. Was it just to give them names? (Why did you call it a giraffe? Because it looked like a giraffe?) Verse twenty alludes to the fact that something else is going on that most overlook. God brought the animals to man for a double purpose: to have man name the animals, and thus establish his lordship over them, and to satisfy man that he could not hope to find from among them a suitable companion—to serve the dual function of helping him physically and spiritually, and at the same time be his intellectual EQUAL.²⁵

²³ Levine, Rachel, D. *“The Woman’s Role: Part 1: What it was, what it became, what it should be.” Yavo Digest*, vol. 5, no. 1: 18. Print.

²⁴ Bereishis, vol. 1: 104. Print.

²⁵ Bereishis, vol. 1: 105. Print.

It would be good, at this point, to simply ask, “If this is true, why didn’t God create woman apart from man in the beginning like the animals? Why create two in one?” At first the intention may have been to create two, but ultimately only one was created. The Talmud does not imply that God “changed His mind” but simply that “it is not good that man should be alone”; man’s quest for a companion and helper from among the animals—although this quest was obviously known by God in advance to be abortive—was designed to stress the sacred and precious nature of this partnership. God willed that man should experience life without a woman for a brief time before her creation so that her arrival would be precious to him. Thus, man being ALONE was the problem. If man wasn’t aware of his solitude then he would be a self sufficient being without any desire for another being equal unto himself. As Adam sees pairs of animals paraded in front of him, two by two, he notices that they all have a mate, a partner that complements the male, and he doesn’t. Because of his DESIRE TO HAVE A MATE God causes a deep sleep to come upon him.

It is at this point that one of the most incredible events occurs in all of history. The impact is so tremendous that it will impact the rest of this study. If you don’t get the importance and dimension of the next few comments you will miss the whole point of this discussion and will continue to misunderstand the role of women in both secular and religious life. Are you ready? Read carefully.

In most of our English translations we have the English word “rib” used to translate what God took to form Eve from; however, this is not the best translation of the Hebrew word *tsela`*. It is used elsewhere in the biblical text to refer to the ribs of a ship, a cell or cage that contains

something (2 Kings 6:15, 16; 7:3). It is interesting that this account was written years before we knew that all of the human body is composed of things called CELLS! Every one of these contains all of the necessary ingredients to form an exact duplication of you in kind.

Today we call it a clone which won't be you, but it will be an exact duplication of you.

(Interestingly enough, if you clone a male you won't get a female—only a male.) The Hebrew commentary Bereishis correctly translates the word, otherwise translated incorrectly rib, as “side”.

“And He took one of his sides, and He filled in flesh in its place.” (v. 21)

The implication is that man was simply split right down the middle and woman, a coequal partner, is just that: a partner in life - equal in every way!

Why create Adam then Eve? Physiologically speaking, all of the reproductive organs in the male are a part of the female in vestige form. Tissues are the same in both man and woman, but they are put together differently. It's a relatively simple process to surgically go, in a physical sexual framework, from male to female, or vice-versa, because of this. Thus, the material for women's body was not taken from the earth like mans. God built one side of woman into man so that the single human being now became two. Thereby, the complete equality of man and woman was irrefutably demonstrated.²⁶ From this point on it is believed, by the Jews, that without his wife, his helper corresponding to him, man was only half a man. He can achieve wholeness only with her. Woman was created from man to show that only in

²⁶ Bereishis, vol. 1: 108-109. Print.

²⁸ Meiselman, 10. Print.

partnership do the two form a complete human being—either one, alone, is incomplete. The completion and perfection of the human personality occurs when man and woman live for each other, give to each other, and function together as one unit, each performing HIS OR HER OWN UNIQUE TASKS.²⁸

In Judaism marriage is nothing less than the fulfillment of a commandment—a must, in order to restore the wholeness of the original Adam, which we might call the “first Adam.” Furthermore, the union between man and women must be physical in order to reflect this wholeness. A related teaching considers a different Hebrew word for “man,” aside from the much-misunderstood word, “Adam.” The word is “Ish,” and its feminine counterpart is “Ishah,” “woman.” The Sages of old played with the letters of these words and taught that when Ish and Ishah are combined—when man and woman are united, the result is “Esh-Yah,” which means “the fire of God.” The idea is simply: when man and woman come together, the result may either be a fire of destruction and purging, or else the pure flame of a deep and committed relationship, expressing the Shekhinah, the supernatural presence of God.²⁷

While many understand the first commandment “be fruitful and multiply” as the purpose of marriage, let’s look at Genesis 2:24 to see if the text agrees. Here we have the famous, but misunderstood verse, “And the man shall cleave unto his wife...” The root word here is *davak*, from which the modern Hebrew word *devek*, “glue”, is derived. The man and woman are “cemented,” or “glued” together in oneness, expressing the primordial Oneness of Deity. This is not to say that they are to become one person. Judaism is not so naïve as to

²⁷ Hanson, 15.

teach that differing personalities, differing attributes, are somehow to be obliterated in marriage. On the contrary, man and woman are to glory in their differences, and their different rules. But they are to become one flesh, one “unit”, expressing diversity within an overarching unity. This is the nature of marriage, and this is the nature of God.²⁸ If misunderstood, because of a misinterpretation of the very beginning of man...well, we know what’s happened don’t we?

Finally, what about the verse that says, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother.” (Gen. 2:24) It’s the man who leaves home and actively pursues, actively searches for, a wife and partner. There is inherent in the man a certain striving, a restlessness, a searching for perfection. Doesn’t that say something about the nature of men in the world? Men, are, by and large, strivers, searchers, builders, movers, shakers and creators. Men try to produce perfection, knowing in their heart of hearts that perfection is what they lack. Women, by contrast, are already whole, already perfect, lacking nothing. (After all, they do think out of both sides of their brain at once don’t they?) Returning again to Jewish tradition, it’s the woman who symbolizes home, and the home, in turn, epitomizes perfection. So it is, that on Friday evening, the beginning of the day which represents the home, the Sabbath, it falls to a woman to kindle the Sabbath lights and usher in the warmth of the holiest of days. In fact, only if a woman cannot be found is a man allowed to light the candles. The Sabbath is the day of perfection, and the very word ‘Sabbath’ is feminine.²⁹ At this point what can we conclude?

²⁸ Hanson, 15.

²⁹ Hanson, 15.

1. Woman was created from Adam, his other half, and thus is his EQUAL IN ALL THINGS.
2. Man without woman is considered only half a man.
3. The division within Adam only occurred when the desire for it to occur happened. Man desired to have a partner.
4. Eve is never an afterthought and thus is not something that is simply to serve Adam while he never serves her. Marriage is a co-partnership where both sides pull their weight. In marriage both partners are equal. One is not superior to the other! If this is true in marriage then it is also true in society and in religion as well.

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