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# ELEMENTS OF THE CREATION IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

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of the requirements for Ordination

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# DIGEST

The Bible begins with the creation of the world and the creation of human life. The first three chapters of the book of Genesis describe the creation of the world, its hierarchical structure, the creation of man and woman, and ultimately their rebellion and departure from the Garden of Eden.

Although these events are described in detail in the Bible, later generations sought to further expound upon them. In some cases, lacunae dictated the need to explain apparent contradictions and problematic verses. In still other situations, the need to interpret these verses was compelled by external challenges to the main stream ideologies and beliefs of the Rabbis during the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods.

This thesis is divided into four primary chapters. The first chapter examines the rabbis' attitudes towards the study of the esoteric and cosmological questions which were derived from the biblical narrative of creation.

The following chapter (chapter two) looks specifically at rabbinic passages dealing with the world's creation. A major theme which emerges from these midrashim concerns rabbinic attitudes towards premundane creation.

An additional facet of this thesis was the study of the

rabbinic literature on the creation of man and woman (chapter three). Like many of the previous midrashim, cited in the earlier chapters, a large number of the rabbinic passages on this topic seem to be polemical in nature. Several of these passages are also reminiscent of myths from other cultures and traditions.

The fourth chapter looks at the rabbinic descriptions of the events in the Garden of Eden. Each of the protagonists' roles was probed by the rabbis in an attempt to explain why the events transpired as they did, and what the results of these actions were.

The final chapter (conclusion) seeks to analyze the various midrashim and show that although they dealt with different topics, the factors that dictated their creation were often similar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is not only the culmination of a one year project, but also of a quest which has taken many years. It is for this reason that I wish to acknowledge the assistance and support of several people.

First and foremost, I would like to to express my gratitude and thanks to my advisor, Dr. Eugene Mihaly. From the first day, when I walked into his office until the present, his door has remained open. He shared with me his valuable time and knowledge. The two short years that I spent with him, in class and with this thesis, have allowed me the opportunity to listen to his poetic words and ideas. I shall carry these, plus his warmth and sensitivity into my rabbinate.

And of course my family. Although many miles have separated us, we have remained close. Your feelings of love have made many a day and night a bit less lonely. I could not have done it without you. You shall always be with me.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to Terry Abdullah. May his memory, bravery and smile always be my companion.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Unless specifically indicated, the translations of the rabbinic passages used in this thesis derive from the standard translated volumes. Please see the Bibliography for these sources. Whenever this sign [ ] is used in a translation it signifies a note or addition by the author of the thesis. The symbols ( ), and { } denote editorial comments by the official translator. Translations of biblical verses are written in capitalized letters and are from The Holy Scriptures (Jewish Publication Society of America, (1917) 1955).

# INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, questions concerning the creation of the world and the development of human life, more often than not, fall into the realm of the sciences. But, this was not always the case. For centuries, if not, millenia, these questions and those concerning the moral fibers of human existence were the domain of religion.

And yet, on one level such a view is a bit naive. As far as the ancient rabbis were concerned, their science was our religion. The two were interconnected. They searched for the same answers but used the tools available to them. Only in our world have the two been separated into adversaries.

In answering the religious/scientific questions of their time, the rabbis also responded to and interacted with the world around them. They did not, nor could they, exist in a vacuum. The political, economic, moral, societal, and sociological dynamics of their world all played a role in the development of rabbinic thought, and in the case of this thesis, the thought on the issues of the creation of the world and human life.

The book of Genesis describes in great detail the creation of the world, the creation of man and woman, and their eventual first sin. Although these narratives are fairly complete, the rabbis still found various lacunae which needed to be responded to.

Some of the questions which arose from these gaps, and that the rabbis responded to and answered were; the nature of the Creator, the biblical references to dualism, the existence of primordial matter, and the inherent goodness of creation. Several of those which grew from the creation of humans narrative are: why was man and woman created, what is their nature, why were they the last things created, what is the nature of their relationship to each other and the animals, and why did they sin? These are but a few of the issues that will be explored in this thesis.

All of these questions will be examined in light of the world in which the authors and compilers of the midrashim lived. Their world was one in which syncretism flourished. But, it was also a world in which challenges were frequent. Gnostics, heretics and different philosophies all played a role in the development of this midrashic genre. Many of the passages which will be explored definitely reflect a polemical style.

The search for the midrashim which attempted to answer the questions and resolve the polemical conflicts began with A. Hyman's Torah Hakethubah Vahamessurah. From this source, the rabbinic citations corresponding to the biblical verses (Genesis 1:1-5, 1:24-28, 2:7-9, 2:15-25, and 3:1-19) were checked to see if they were pertinent to this thesis. From here, the notes of L. Ginzburg's

seven volume classic Legends of the Jews, were examined and served as an invaluable aid. These two sources, and to some extent the English and Hebrew volumes of M. Kasher's Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation (Torah Shlemah), cited the majority of midrashim on the topic. To a lesser extent, the indexes of Sefer HaAggadah, the Soncino Talmud and the Soncino Midrash Rabbah were reviewed in the search for any additional references. Key words and phrases were also researched in these sources as well as the Jewish Encyclopedia, the Encyclopedia Judaica and the Encyclopedia Talmudit. Some of these were, "creation", "man", "woman", "gnostic", "heretic", "cosmology", and "Garden of Eden".

After all the individual passages were compiled they were categorized according to themes. These themes are represented by the section headings of each chapter. It is important to note, that such a categorization is foreign to rabbinic literature. Whereas, this thesis is arranged topically, rabbinic literature generally had no such structure. Nevertheless, hopefully this arrangement will assist us in understanding the teachings of our rabbis. They persevered and we are here today. They might no longer live, but their words warm the soul and their ideas compel us to continue the process that they perpetuated.

# THE STUDY OF THE WORKS OF CREATION

## I. THE RABBINIC RELUCTANCE TO STUDYING MAASEH BERESHIT

Faced with internal and external challenges, to the theologic norms of their world, generations of Amoraic and Tannaitic rabbis attempted to both create behavioral boundaries and restrict the subjects that could be studied. The study of Maaseh Bereshit was one such area that the rabbis were reluctant to open to general discussion. Due, in part, to gnostic and other heretical interpretations of the Genesis narrative (Genesis 1:1-2:6) the rabbis sought to control the exposition and discussion of those cosmologic and esoteric questions which could confuse and weaken the faith of the un-learned members of the populace.

One such way of controlling the study of Maaseh Bereshit (as well as other problematic areas of thought) was to limit the number of individuals who could participate in the discussion of these questions.

> The laws of incest (Ariyot- Lev. 18:6-20) may not be expounded to three persons, nor the Works of Creation (Maaseh Bereshit- Gen. 1:1-2:6) before two persons, nor the subject of the Chariot (Maaseh Merkavah- Ezek. 1:1ff) before one person alone unless he is a sage and understands his own knowledge. Whoever puts his mind to these four matters it were better for him if he had not come into the world- What is above? What is below? What is before? What is after? And whosoever has no regard for the honour of his Creator it were better for him had he not come into the world. 1

A parallel baraita, to this particular mishnah specifies the number of individuals that may study these three subjects.

> The laws of incest may not be expounded to three people, but it may be expounded to two, nor may the Works of Creation [be expounded] to two people, but it may be expounded to one person, nor may the subject of the Chariot [be expounded] to one unless he is a sage and can comprehend on his own. 2

This baraita confirms that the rabbis were not against these subjects being studied. But, the subjects did dictate the need for strict controls on their transmission. By limiting the number of listeners the rabbis restricted the discussion of these subjects to a small number of people and kept it out of the public forum and the classroom.[3] In the particular case of Maaseh Bereshit, by limiting its study to a teacher and one disciple, the rabbis assured that only those students best equipped to deal with these esoteric matters would study them.

Not everyone, however, agreed with these restrictions. According to a parallel text of the above mishnah, found in the Jerusalem Talmud, which ascribes the authorship of the mishnah to R. Akiba, R. Ishmael expounded on the "Works of Creation" in the presence of two [students].[4] Interestingly, according to the Yerushalmi the halacha ("law") was ascribed to R. Ishmael but the Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) does not preserve this fact.

A baraita from Tosefta Haggigah, however, confirms that

that the law was according to the original mishnah (Haggigah 2:1).

> R. Yose` b. Judah says, "R. Judah discoursed [on Maaseh Bereshit] before Rabban Yohanon b. Zakkai. R. Akiba discoursed before R. Joshua. Hananiah b. Kinai discoursed before R. Akiba. 5

The baraita also indicates that many of the rabbis participated in the study of Maaseh Bereshit. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the rabbinic reluctance towards the study of Maaseh Bereshit did not forbid its study but rather just sought to limit it.

Limiting the number of students who could study Maaseh Bereshit was not the only approach the rabbis utilized in restricting this body of knowledge. They also attempted to set boundaries for studying Maaseh Bereshit by reducing the body of knowledge which could fall under Maaseh Bereshit. Thus, rather than permitting any question about the creation to be asked or expounded upon they sought to limit the time (and spacial) frame of the creation to that which can confirmed.

> whoever reflects upon these four things he would have been better off if he had not come into this world: What is above [that which is in the heavens], what is below [the netherworld], what is before [that which took place before the creation of the world] and what is beyond [that which will take place in the future]. 6

Whereas some of the rabbis had tried to control the study of Maaseh Bereshit through limiting its scope, others attempted different methods. One tactic used suggested that there was real danger involved for those who studied those questions outside the strict definition of Maaseh Bereshit

(Gen. 1:1-2:6). In a complicated midrash, which has been attempted to be interpreted by many scholars,[7] we can see how the rabbis stressed that although permitted there still existed severe penalties if one studied Maaseh Bereshit in an improper fashion.

> It once happened that Simeon b. Zoma was standing wrapped in speculation, when R. Joshua passed and greeted him once and a second time, without his answering him. At the third time he answered in confusion. `What means this Ben Zoma!' exclaimed he. `whence are the feet?...' I [Ben Zoma] was contemplating the [works of] Creation.' ...Thereupon R. Joshua turned to his disciples and remarked to them, `The son of Zoma has gone.' But a few days elapsed and the son of Zoma was in his {eternal} home [me- he died]. 8

Three parallel versions of this story exist.[9] In two of these versions the texts read that Ben Zoma was contemplating the "works of creation"[10] while the third omits this detail.[11] Similarly, each of the four versions uses a different word in its conclusion to describe what happened to Ben Zoma. Each version, however, denotes some form of anguish and displeasure concerning his study of the Maaseh Bereshit[12]

It is quite clear from rabbinic literature that the rabbis were reluctant to permit the public study of Maaseh Bereshit. In order to effectively control what could be studied, as well as develop responses to the gnostics and other challenges, the rabbis permitted the study of Maaseh Bereshit with specific restrictions.[13] These restrictions,

however, did not remain static and they too grew and changed as new challenges and questions developed. One of the first questions to grow out of these restriction concerned the definition of Maaseh Bereshit.

## II. RABBINIC ATTEMPTS TO REDEFINE MAASEH BERESHIT

Confronted by a mishnah which expressly prohibited the public teaching and transmission of the esoteric questions, which emerged from the creation narrative, some of the rabbis attempted to modify the mishnaic prohibition by redefining Maaseh Bereshit. Such modifications are found in various rabbinic sources.[14] Using, in many cases, the biblical verse "For ask thou now of the days past, which were before you, since the day God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? (Deuteronomy 4:32)" the rabbis sought to demonstrate that the mishnaic prohibition concerned only that which existed before the six days of creation. Such an argument, however, was not limited to the exegesis of the Deuteronomy verse. Other biblical verses were also interpreted to arrive at the same view.[15] Suffice it to say, many rabbis made every attempt to prove that biblical proof texts permitted Maaseh Bereshit, in a limited sense, to be studied and expounded upon.

Such a discussion takes place in the Babylonian Talmud.

> NOR THE WORK OF CREATION IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO. From where {do we infer} this?- For the Rabbis taught: `FOR ASK THOU NOW OF THE DAYS PAST´ (Deut. 4:32); one may inquire, but two may not inquire. One might have thought that one may inquire concerning the pre-creation period, therefore Scripture teaches: `SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON THE EARTH´ One might have thought that one may {also} not inquire concerning the six days of creation, therefore Scripture teaches: `THE DAYS PAST [the first days of the world] WHICH WERE BEFORE THEE´ One might have thought one may {also} inquire what is above and what is below, what before and what after, therefore the Scripture teaches: `AND FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN UNTO THE OTHER´ {Concerning the things that are} from one end of heaven unto the other thou mayest inquire, but thou mayest not inquire what is above, what is below, what before, what after. 16

A closer examination of this passage is beneficial to permit us to see exactly how the rabbis came to their conclusions.[17]

"For Ask Thou Of The Days Past" (Deut. 4:32): In this verse "thou" is written in the form of the second person singular command. Consequently, since the rabbis interpreted this verse to be referring to the study of Maaseh Bereshit then the "thou" proves that one may study only with one person (since the noun is in the singular) the cosmological questions which arose from the Genesis narrative.

"Since The Day That God Created Man Upon The Earth": The rabbis understood this part of the verse to say that the only aspect of Maaseh Bereshit one could study is since the creation of man. Thus the five preceding days are forbidden since they existed before man was created.

"The Days Past Which Were Before You": Taken by itself, the previous part of the biblical phrase allowed only the study of those events which took place from the day of man's creation, i.e., the sixth day. Knowing, however, that the Torah itself dealt with parts of the creation which preceded the sixth day, the rabbis found in this phrase biblical permission for pre-sixth day studies. Accordingly one should read the phrase to say; "the days past [1-5], which were before you [which you can see for you know of them since they are a part of your history as recorded in the {Gen. 1:1-2:6}]." In this manner the rabbis were able to broaden the time frame of Maaseh Bereshit and sanction the study of the esoteric questions which grew out of the first five days of creation.

"And From One End Of Heaven Unto The Other": I.e., one may study the heavens of this world, but no anything outside of them (i.e., what is above, what is below, what before and what after). In other words, you may ask cosmological questions but only about that which directly preceded you (and was a part of history and known to you) but not that which preceded the creation of the world.

Bar Kappara used the same verse, but derived a slightly different meaning. Of the rabbis, he was one most identified with redefining and opening up the subject of Maaseh Bereshit. A disciple of Judah Ha-Nasi, he lived in Eretz Yisrael around the year 200 CE.[18] Concerning this

specific topic there exist two parallel midrashic sources ascribed to Bar Kappara. The first, from Bereshit Rabbah states that:

> Bar Kappara stated: `FOR ASK NOW OF THE DAYS PAST, WHICH WERE BEFORE THEE, SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON THE EARTH (Deut. 4:32): SINCE THE DAY,´ You may expound on that since the days were created, but you may not expound on that which preceded them. `AND FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN UNTO THE OTHER´: You may examine, but you may not examine that which preceded them. Rabbi Judah b. Pazzai expounded on Maaseh Bereshit, in accordance with Bar Kappara. [19]

The parallel version of this midrash comes from a late midrashic collection; Pesikta Rabbati.[20]

> Bar Kappara derived the degree of limitation upon exposition from the verse `FOR ASK NOW OF THE FIRST DAYS WHICH WERE BEFORE THEE SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON EARTH´ Offhand, one might suppose, according to this verse, that one is permitted to ask questions in public only about events since the sixth day of creation and after it. But since the verse begins with `ASK NOW OF THE FIRST DAYS´ we have here an instance of Scripture´s making a general statement and then limiting it. Accordingly, we are to infer the degree of limitation upon exposition from the limiting phrase `SINCE THE SIXTH DAY´. What is the special character of the sixth day? It is one of the six days of the creation. Hence in exposition you are not to refer to any days other than those which are like the sixth day. In short, you are not to expound publicly on what is above the heavens and what is below the deep. Hence the verse goes on to limit you, saying, `ASK NOW...FROM THE ONE END OF HEAVEN UNTO THE OTHER´. In short you are not to expound publicly on anything except the world in which you live. In keeping with the opinion of Bar Kappara, R. Yudan ben Pazzai expounded Scripture publicly in regard to the six days of creation.

Like the above talmudic passage both these midrashim

advocate the limited study, but nonetheless, the study of Maaseh Bereshit from the first day of creation (Gen. 1:1ff).

According to R. Judah B. Simon there were other verses (besides the one from Deuteronomy) which permitted the study of the "works of creation". He determined that these biblical verses proved that God had already revealed the answers to the esoteric and cosmological questions which later generations would ask. Consequently, since God had revealed these answers, it was permissible by asking the appropriate questions to search for them.

> R. Judah b. Simon said: From the commencement of the world's creation `HE REVEALETH THE DEEP AND SECRET THINGS (Dan. 2:22),' for it is written, `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN, (Gen. 1:1)' but it is not explained how. Where then is it explained? Elsewhere: `THAT STRETCHETH OUT THE HEAVENS AS A CURTAIN (Isa. 40:22)'; `AND THE EARTH, (Gen 1:1)' which is likewise not explained. Where is that explained? Elsewhere: `FOR HE SAITH TO THE SNOW: FALL THOU ON THE EARTH, etc. (Job 37:6)'. 21

In this midrash R. Judah b. Simon explained that the "works of creation" were in fact not areas of great mystery, but rather, "deep and secret things" (Dan. 2:22) that God had revealed when "In the Beginning [He] God created the Heaven" (Gen. 1:1). Furthermore, R. Judah b. Simon informed his listeners that the the Bible itself (in the books of Isaiah 40:22 and Job 37:6) contained the answers to the esoteric and cosmological questions of how God created the world. This creative use of the scripture gave latter generations of rabbis fortitude in their struggle to study

the "works of creation". By finding in the Bible answers to the esoteric questions the rabbis were able to respond to their critics and declare that they were, in fact, only studying the Bible itself.

The possibility exists that one could reverse the argument and suggest that this passage, rather than encouraging the study of the "works of creation", really attempted to limit it. This midrash could be arguing that there was no reason to study the "works of creation" since the answers to all the esoteric and cosmological questions already existed in the Bible. Thus, there is no reason to search for them. The problem with this theory, however, is that one still had to search the scriptures for the answers and this act, in fact, constituted an act of studying Maaseh Bereshit.

## III. AREAS OF MAASEH BERESHIT THAT SHOULD NOT BE STUDIED

Challenged by rabbis who wanted to delve deeper into the cosmologic and esoteric realms of the unknowable, and threatened by the verbal attacks of gnostics and other heretical groups, some rabbis sought to preserve the tradition by forbidding certain questions to be asked and particular subjects to be explored. These rabbis, unlike their colleagues, who had desired an open definition of

Maaseh Bereshit, were more inclined towards a restricted and closed field of study. Examples of their views can be found in both classical halachic and midrashic collections. The most common of these references deal with the injunction against the study of "what is above, what is below, what is before and what is after." Rabbinic literature also contains passages that are more direct in their approach and enjoin the student to refrain from questioning the nature of the world, the existence of several deities and the existence of premundane matter (this last topic will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter).

The earliest set of restrictions on what areas of Maaseh Bereshit could not be studied come from the Mishnah. Already examined above, this particular mishnah states that

> Whoever puts his mind [delves into] these four matters it were better for him if he had not come into the world.- What is above? What is below? What is beyond [before]? What is after? 22

In this mishnah we find the basic precept by which later generations of rabbinic texts modeled their injunctions against the study of Maaseh Bereshit. Thus, we find in the Tosefta[23] and the Gemara[24] reiterations of this restriction, but with more detail. Specifically, both the Tosefta and Gemara utilize the biblical verse, Deuteronomy 4:32, to further define and limit the study of the esoteric questions which evolved from these areas. The Tosefta passage states that:

> Whoever reflects upon four things would have

> been better off had he not been born: What is above, what is below, what is within [before] and what is beyond [after] {Mish. Hag. 2:1} Might one suppose that this applies before the works of Creation? Scripture says, {`FOR ASK NOW OF THE DAYS THAT ARE PAST, WHICH WERE BEFORE YOU} SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON THE EARTH´ (Deut. 4:32). Might one suppose that this is before the order of the seasons was created {established}? Scripture says,` AND ASK FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN TO THE OTHER {WHETHER SUCH A GREAT THING AS THIS HAS EVER HAPPENED OR WAS EVER HEARD OF}´ (Deut. 4:32). What, then, is the meaning of this Scripture, `SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON THE EARTH´ (Deut.4:32)? Concerning matters since the day that God created man upon the earth you may expound. But you may not seek to know [expound on] what is above, what is below, what is within [before] and what is beyond [after]. 25

The parallel passage from the Talmud records a similar point of view.

> One might have thought one may {also} inquire concerning what is above, and what is below, what before and what after, therefore the text [Torah] teaches: `AND FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN UNTO THE OTHER´ (Deut. 4:32). {Concerning the things that are} from one end of heaven unto the other thou mayest inquire, but thou may not inquire what is above, what is below, what before and what after. 26

All three of these halachic texts draw the same conclusion; one may not study about four specific esoteric and cosmologic areas of thought.

As can be ascertained from the above passages the rabbis perceived of the four as areas of knowledge outside the parameters of Torah, and therefore forbidden. Consequently, "what is above" was thought to mean those questions which attempted to explain what existed above the cosmos, i.e., in heaven whereas "what is below" concerned

that which exists or existed in the netherworld. Those questions and subjects drawn from "what is before" deal with that which took place before the creation of the world (i.e., before the events described in `BERESHIT BARA ELOHIM´, "In the Beginning God created... Gen. 1:1) while "what is after" involves those speculative areas dealing with the future. As has been explained above, the rabbis attempted to stay away from these questions. Rather, they preferred to deal only with that which had been stated in or proven from the Torah.

The rabbis also employed midrashic techniques to teach the same message. A classic example of this type enterprise is found in an early midrashic collection, Bereshit Rabbah. By cleverly using the shape of the Hebrew letter beth, which is closed on three sides, the author of this midrash was able to find an additional scriptural proof forbidding the study of the four esoteric themes.

> R. Jonah said in the name of R. Lazar: Why was the world created with a beth [`{B}ERESHIT BARA ELOHIM- `In the Beginning God created...´(Gen. 1:1)]? Just as the beth is closed on its sides and open in its front, so too, you are not permitted to expound on what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after. 27

Like the above halachic passages, this midrash also uses the common formula, "what is above, what is below, what is before and what is after." The interpretation, however, is slightly confusing since the passage forbids the study of the four areas based on the three closed sides of the beth.

The midrash suggests that the top of the beth symbolizes what is "above", the bottom of the beth, that which is "below", and "before" you, i.e., the pre-creation past, is represented by the back of the beth. The final direction, "in back of", signifies the future, which is in behind us as we look into the open end of the beth.

In some cases the rabbis were more specific about what kinds of questions should not be asked. There are numerous midrashim which delineate the kinds of questions that were inappropriate to ask. Of course, at times the rabbis were forced to respond even to these questions and therefore had to ignore their own edicts. Nevertheless, a survey of rabbinic literature demonstrates that the rabbis generally followed the injunctions.

Not all the rabbis were in favor, however, of expounding on Maaseh Bereshit. As explained in the midrash below such an enterprise was seen by some as an arrogant act and contemptuous of God's glory. Of additional interest concerning this passage, in Bereshit Rabbah, is that it is ascribed to "R. Huna in the name of Bar Kappara" (who advocated the expounding of the "works of creation"). But, in a parallel version, from the Jerusalem Talmud, it is ascribed to Rav.[28] Because of the nature of the argument one should assume that the correct source should be Rav and that the passage's ascription to Bar Kappara comes from the

closing section of a passage which probably did derive from Bar Kappara.[29]

> R. Huna quoted in Bar Kappara's name: `LET THE LYING LIPS BE DUMB -te'alamnah' (Ps. 31:19): this means, Let them be bound, made dumb and silenced. `Let them be bound,' as in the verse, `FOR, BEHOLD WE WERE BINDING SHEAVES-me'allemim allumin' (Gen. 37:7); `LET THEM BE MADE DUMB,' as you read, `OR WHO MADE A MAN DUMB-illem' (Ex. 4:11); while `LET THEM BE SILENCED' is its literal meaning. `WHICH SPEAK `athak' ARROGANTLY AGAINST THE RIGHTEOUS (Ps. 31:19), meaning, {which speak} against {the will of} the Righteous One, who is the Life of all worlds, on matters which He has withheld [`he`etik'] from his creatures. `WITH PRIDE' (Ps. 31:19)! in order to boast and say, `I discourse on Maaseh Bereshit' `AND CONTEMPT' (Ps. 31:19): he is as one who scorns My Glory! For R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: Whoever elevates himself at the cost of his fellow man's degradation has no share in the World to Come. How much the more {when it is done at the expense of} the glory of God![30]

Using the verse from the book of Psalms "Let the lying lips be dumb, which speak arrogantly against the righteous, with pride and contempt" (31:19), Rav argued that rather than God's revealing the "works of creation" in the Scriptures (as suggested in Bereshit Rabbah 1:6), God withheld them from His creatures.

The continuation of this midrash (see below) is also of particular interest for it clearly shows how two traditions were merged together. In the first part of the midrash we find a strong injunction against the study of Maaseh Bereshit while the second half of the midrash expresses the rabbinic concern for the essential goodness of creation.

During the rabbinic period there existed gnostic groups

who viewed the world as evil. Consequently, if the world was corrupt, and it was created by a god, then it stood to reason that so, too, this god was an evil deity. For the rabbis, however, they saw God and all God's creations as perfect (in the case of humans, potentially perfect) and therefore also inherently good. They thus defended the classical rabbinic positions, as follows:

> And what is written after it? `OH HOW ABUNDANT IS THY GOODNESS, WHICH THOU HAST LAID UP FOR THEM THAT FEAR THEE' (Ps. 31:20). Said Rab: Let him [the one who studies the forbidden areas of Maaseh Bereshit] have nought of thine abundant goodness. In human practice, when an earthly monarch builds a palace on a site of sewers, dunghills, and garbage, if one says, `This palace is built on a site of sewers, dunghills, and garbage,' does he not discredit it? Thus, whoever comes to say that this world was created out of TOHU and BOHU (Gen. 1:2) and darkness, does he not impair {God's glory}! R. Huna said in Bar Kappara's name: If the matter were not written, it would be impossible to say it, viz., GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH; out of what? Out of NOW THE EARTH WAS TOHU AND BOHU (Gen. 1:2). 31

The rabbis maintained that though the world was created out of Tohu and Bohu, it is nevertheless a beautiful palace. One should concentrate not on the pre-creation dump heap, but on the magnificence of the created world.

## IV. THE RABBINIC USAGE OF MAASEH BERESHIT AS A PROOF OF THE WORLD'S INHERENT GOODNESS

The rabbis used various midrashic methods to prove the

eternal goodness of creation and the world. As has been shown above, knowledge derived from the study of Maaseh Bereshit often served to strengthen the rabbinic arguments and was thus used in these polemics. In some cases, therefore, Maaseh Bereshit was accepted as that period of time from Genesis 1:1-2:6, while in others, the time period had to be enlarged to include the period before Genesis 1:1. When this second definition was used, the rabbis usually found scriptural passages to describe these events. This was important for it sanctioned the information as deriving from an already revealed source, the Torah. Therefore it was not speculative.

In attempting to prove, in their polemics, the eternal goodness of creation, the rabbis frequently played on certain alphabetical letters found in the Torah. The most common plays were on the letters alef or beth. The early midrash, Bereshit Rabbah states:

> Another interpretation: why [was the world created/ why did the Torah begin] with a [the letter] beth [which is the second letter of the hebrew alphabet]? Because it connotes blessing (berakah)[which also begins with the letter beth]. Another interpretation: And why not with an alef [which is the first letter of the hebrew alphabet]? In order not to provide a justification to the heretics to plead, `How can the world endure, seeing that it was created with the language of cursing [the hebrew word for "curse"- arur]?' Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, said, `Lo, I will create it with the language of blessing, and would that it would stand!' 32

This particular midrash is significant in that it

specifically states its objective; "In order not to provide a justification for the heretics (Minim) to plead...". This suggests that there were individuals, or groups who argued that the inherent nature of the world was evil. By using their exegetical skills, the rabbis drew, from the seemingly insignificant fact that the Torah began with a beth, a rational and masterful counter-argument.

Another example of alphabetical prooftexting comes from the Talmud. According to this passage, which deals with well being, we can deduce that the world is good because God did not use the letter tet until He stated that what had been created was good ({t}ov).

> The real reason is that Scripture used this letter {tet} on the very first occasion to express something good, for from the beginning of Genesis up to to {the verse} AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT (Gen. 1:4), no tet occurs. 33

The rabbis used other arguments in their polemics to prove the essential goodness of creation. A common approach was to show that God consulted with the righteous (who themselves were considered good) before creating the world. It could then be argued that since God created the world in consultation with the righteous then the actual creation must also be inherently good.

> R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name: He took counsel with the souls of the righteous, as it is written, `THESE WERE THE MAKERS, AND THOSE THAT DWELT AMONG PLANTATIONS AND HEDGES; THERE THEY DWELT WITH THE KING IN HIS WORK' (1 Chron. 4:23). `THESE WERE THE MAKERS': they are so termed on account of the verse, `THEN THE LORD FORMED

{made} MAN, etc´ (Gen. 2:7); `AND THOSE THAT DWELT AMONG PLANTATIONS´ corresponds to `AND THE LORD PLANTED A GARDEN EASTWARD´ (Gen. 2:8);`AND HEDGES´ corresponds to `I HAVE PLACED THE SAND FOR THE BOUND OF THE SEA´ (Jer. 5:22); `THERE THEY DWELT WITH THE KING IN HIS WORK´: with the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, sat the souls of the righteous with whom He took counsel before creating the world. 34

Righteousness played another role in the rabbinic polemics against the philosophy which advocated an incomplete and evil world. In addition to having God take counsel with the righteous, the rabbis also viewed the righteousness of mankind as a precondition of the creation. Thus, in various midrashim the rabbis created dialogues in which God affirmed the belief that the creation of the world was dependent on the righteousness of humans. Consequently, since the world´s existence depended upon righteousness then this must have meant that the world itself (and therefore its creation) were acts of goodness.

R. Simeon b. Lakish said: What is the meaning of the verse, `AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING THE SIXTH DAY´ (Gen. 1:31)? It teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with all creation, saying, If Israel will accept the Torah all will be well, but if not, I will turn the world void and without form. 35

Although the basic point of this midrash is quite clear additional analysis would be useful.

According to this midrash, the creation of the world and its continued existence were predicated upon Israel´s acceptance of the Torah (one may interchange Torah and righteousness for the one who follows the Torah follows the

way of righteousness). The midrash concludes with the warning that if Israel does not accept the Torah the world will be destroyed. In a particularly clever approach the midrash makes this warning by using the phrases tohu and bohu which ultimately refers the student back to the state of being before creation.

A similar thought is conveyed in a later midrash. A midrash from Pesikta Rabbati maintains that the continued existence of the world is dependent on the righteous and not the wicked. Again, this midrash uses the imagery of the creation narrative to convey the message.

> FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH (Ex. 20:11). Did it really take six days to create them? Was it not said long ago, `BY THE WORD OF THE LORD WERE THE HEAVENS MADE; AND ALL THE HOST OF THEM BY THE BREADTH OF HIS MOUTH´ (Ps. 33:6)? Rather [the Torah says it took six days] to remind the wicked that they work constantly {Braude- to remind the wicked of their requital for working (six days a week)} to destroy the world that was created in six days; and to give a just reward to the righteous who work to preserve {Braude- for working (six days of the week) to maintain} the world that was created in six days. 36

In this midrash the rabbis attempted to reconcile two seemly opposing views of the creation. In the Genesis version of the creation (and reiterated in this passage by Exodus 20:11) the creation takes six days. But, many might have asked if this, in fact, proved that God was indeed not all powerful for why else would it take six days to create the world? To answer this challenge, the rabbis used a two

prong attack. First they used the Psalm's verse to show God's infinite power. Not only did God create the world at one moment but did so solely with His breath. In order to answer the challenge of those who asked why six days were recorded, the rabbis responded that the six days are allusions to later generations of wicked and righteous people who work all week (six days) to create or destroy the world.

Both these midrashim show the rabbinic attitude towards the belief that the maintenance of the world's existence is dependent on the deeds of the righteous. The rabbis would argue that since the world's existence is dependent on the righteous, then this must suggest that the world is inherently good, for good can only add to good and evil to evil, but good cannot add to evil and evil to good.

Similarly, the rabbis envisioned God as being able to see the deeds of the righteous and the wicked before the actual creation of the world. It would therefore stand to reason, according to the rabbis, that if the world was meant solely for the wicked, it would never have been created, but because of the righteous it was created. Therefore, the world, and its creation must be seen as good.

> R. Jannai said: From the very beginning of the world's creation the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw the deeds of the righteous and he deeds of the wicked. `AND THE EARTH WAS DESOLATE [tohu]' (Gen. 1:2) alludes to the deeds of the wicked: `AND GOD SAID: LET THERE BE LIGHT' (Gen. 1:3), to those of the

> righteous; `AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT, THAT IT WAS GOOD´ (Gen. 1:4), to the deeds of the righteous; `AND GOD MADE A DIVISION BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND THE DARKNESS´ (Gen. 1:4): between the deeds of the righteous and those of the wicked; `AND GOD CALLED THE LIGHT DAY´ (Gen. 1:5), alludes to the deeds of the righteous, `AND THE DARKNESS CALLED HE NIGHT´ (Gen. 1:5), to those of the wicked, `AND THERE WAS EVENING´ (Gen.1:5), to the deeds of the wicked, `AND THERE WAS MORNING´ (Gen. 1:5), to those of the righteous; `ONE DAY´ (Gen. 1:5): the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them one day, and which is that? It is the day of Judgement. 37

The above midrash is an excellent example of the rabbinic usage of biblical exegesis and the study of Maaseh Bereshit. Rather than taking the first five verses of the Genesis narrative in a literal fashion the rabbis broke them apart in order to show that the first day of creation alluded to the tensions between the righteous and wicked in this world. At the same time, the rabbis maintained that God foresaw the future. Although such an idea is in keeping with basic Jewish tenets concerning the omnipotence of the Almighty, such a statement here also indicates that the rabbis were willing to read into the past (pre-creation) what they believed God knew.

In their efforts to prove the essential goodness of the world the rabbis often had to delve more into Maaseh Bereshit than they might have preferred. There exists a body of midrashim which allege that before God created this world other worlds had been created and destroyed. This world, however, remained because it was good and complete whereas the others were not. Nonetheless, in order to

create these images the rabbis had to discuss periods of time before the creation of this world. To make this more palatable they often used prooftexts from other places in the Bible to show that the information was already stated, and thus not questionable. In other cases the ends justified the means and the polemical value was more essential then the judicial value, and the use of Maaseh Bereshit was given a wider berth.

> AND THERE WAS EVENING, etc. R. Judah b. R. Simon said: `Let there be evening´ is not written here, but `AND THERE WAS EVENING´: hence we know that a time-order existed before this. R. Abbahu said: This proves the Holy One, blessed be He, went on creating worlds and destroying them until He created this one and declared, `This one pleases Me; and those did not please Me.´ R. Phineas said: this is R. Abbahu´s reason: `AND GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND, **BEHOLD**, IT WAS VERY GOOD´ (Gen. 1:31): this pleases Me, but those did not please Me. 38

In this midrash we find two rabbinic proofs for the existence of prior worlds. The first is supplied by R. Judah b. R. Simon. According to this proof, we can ascertain the existence of prior worlds from the biblical verse, "And there was evening." In this case, R. Judah b. R. Simon argued that the Torah says "there was evening" rather than `Let there be evening". This difference is important for whereas the first, "there was evening" suggests that it already existed, the second, `Let there be evening´ implies a creative act. Thus, R. Judah b. R. Simon reasoned, since evening already existed than something

must have preceded it.These he believed to have been previous worlds.

The second interpretation, by R. Abbahu, uses a different line of reasoning to prove the same point.[39] In this interpretation he saw the proof for prior worlds coming from the verse, "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good". The secret to understanding this passage is in the word, HINEI, "behold". According to several of the modern commentaries, hinei in this context should be understood as "now" rather than, "behold".[40] Consequently, the biblical passage reads "God saw everything that He had made, and, NOW, it was very good" thus inferring that, something existed before that was not "very good".

In a different midrashic collection, Shemot (Exodus) Rabbah R. Abbahu makes the same claim in his interpretation of the phrase, ve'eleh mishpatim, "and these are the ordinances" (Ex. 21:1). In this passage, he explained that the word, eleh, "these", varied in meaning depending on whether it had an "and" in front of it or not.

> Another explanation of `NOW THESE (WE-ELEH) ARE THE ORDINANCES'. R. Abbahu said: Wherever it is written `we-eleh' (`and these'), it indicates an addition to objects previously. mentioned, but where it is written `eleh' (`these'), it indicates the disqualification of the preceding. For example? `THESE (`eleh') ARE THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED' (Gen. 2:4)- What was disqualified there? God created a heaven and earth, but when He looked at them they were not pleasing in His sight, so He changed them back into waste [`tohu'] and

> void [`bohu´]; but when He looked at this heaven and earth, it pleased Him, and He exclaimed, `These shall have generations.´ Hence, `THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH´; but the first did not have any generations. 41

Another midrash takes R. Abbahu´s interpretation of the existence of previous worlds and applies it to a scriptural verse. In Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) Rabbah Abbahu´s exegesis is used to support R. Tanhuma´s understanding of the verse "He hath made everything beautiful in its time (Ecc. 3:2)."

> R. Tanhuma said: In its due time was the universe created. It was not meant to be created before then, but it was created at its proper time, as it is said, `HE HATH MADE EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL IN ITS TIME´. R. Abbahu said: From this {we learn} that the Holy One, blessed be He, kept on constructing worlds and destroying them until he constructed the present one and said, `this one pleases Me, the others did not.´ 42

Basing himself, on the phrase, "in its time" R. Tanhuma argued that the world was meant to come into existence at a pre-ordained, planned time. A belief in the planned creation of the world removed any elements of chance or imperfection from the actual creation. And, therefore such attitudes served to build up the rabbinic fortresses of thought against opposing charges.

The second part of this midrash repeats Abbahu´s statement as seen above. A parallel midrash, however, does add to the issue at hand. This parallel midrash, Bereshit Rabbah 9:2, restates (exactly) the above midrash but includes an additional line in its conclusion.

> R. Phineas said: The proof of R. Abbahu´s

> statement is: `AND GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND, BEHOLD [NOW], IT WAS VERY GOOD´ (Gen. 1:31). 43

This closing statement, which is also repeated in Bereshit Rabbah 3:7 informs the reader of the basis on which Abbahu makes his argument.

Often the rabbis had to be more direct in their approach. In their commentary on the biblical verse "And God called the light, day" (Gen. 1:5) the rabbis deduced that God does not link Himself with that which is evil.

> AND GOD CALLED THE LIGHT, DAY. R. Eleazar said: The Holy One, blessed be He, does not link His name with evil, but only with good. Thus it is not written here, `And God called the light day, and the darkness God called night,´ but `AND THE DARKNESS CALLED HE NIGHT´. 44

In this seemingly short and concise passage the rabbis drew several conclusions. By comparing the first part of the Genesis verse to the second part they saw that the first part contained the name of God while the second part only referred to Him in the third person. To the rabbinic mind, this suggested something deeper.

Since the dawn of humankind the idea probably existed that there were forces of light and forces of darkness. These eternal forces were constantly doing battle with each other to gain the supremacy of this world. For the believer, the forces of light were symbolized by goodness, while the forces of evil were symbolized by darkness. We can generally conclude that the rabbis did not accept this philosophy. But, aspects of it may have filtered their way

into rabbinic thought. One such component was the interrelationship between day (and light) equaling good and night (and darkness) equaling evil. We see in the above midrash this very idea.

If we take this midrash and enlarge its spectrum we can also see another message. The midrash states that God does not connect His name with that which is evil. In this midrash God connects His name with something specific; "light" which means that light is good. Thus, although it was left unsaid by the rabbis, it may be deduced that by reason of inference the creation of the heavens and earth were also good since "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen.1:1). Just as God connected His name to light in verse five, so, too, God connected His name to the creation of the heavens and the earth in verse one.

The consequence of all these declarations was that the heavens and the earth were not evil in nature but rather holy (good) for they emanated either directly or indirectly from the Supreme being of goodness, and holiness; God.

## V. THE RABBINIC USAGE OF MAASEH BERESHIT TO REFUTE THE IDEA OF A PLURALITY OF GODS

As well as using Maaseh Bereshit as a polemical tool against those who saw the world and God as less than good, the rabbis also used it to defend God as the only existing

deity. Like the polemics proving the world's inherent goodness, these polemics often had to describe in greater detail, than stated in the Torah, events that took place in Genesis 1:1-2:6, or in some cases beforehand. Consequently, the study of Maaseh Bereshit, and the answers which could be derived from its questions was essential to successful rabbinic polemics on this issue.

The idea that more than one god created the world has its roots both external and internal to classical Judaism. The external influences go back several millennia and cross many cultural and and national borders. From the Babylonians to the other Near Eastern cultures, and from the early Egyptians to the Greek pantheon, mythological tales arose describing various deities and the manner by which they created the world. We can even see, in the midrashim of the rabbis, how some of the ideas from such tales crept into their system of thought.

> When the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world He said to the Prince of the sea: `Open your mouth and swallow all the waters of creation.' Said the Prince to Him: `Sovereign of the Universe! It is sufficient for me to retain what I already have,' and he began to weep. The Holy One, blessed be He, kicked him and killed him; as may be inferred from the text, `HE STIRRETH UP THE SEA WITH HIS POWER AND BY HIS UNDERSTANDING HE SMITTETH THROUGH RAHAB' (Job 26:12). 45

A similar midrash is found in Pesikta Rabbati. In this passage, like the previous one, there is discussion between God and a prince (in this case the Prince of Darkness).

> Why did the Holy One blessed be He, create

> His world in Nisan and did not create it in Iyyar? Because when the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, He said to the Prince of Darkness: Depart from Me, because I wish the world to be created in light. 46

Although neither of these midrashim describe more than one deity we can see how they parallel some of these earlier myths. One might even say that the essence of these midrashim are older. But their present form reflects a reworking of the older story. Thus, the Prince of the Sea could have originally been an aquatic god (i.e., Neptune) and the Prince of Darkness, the God of darkness (in charge of the forces of evil). The rabbis, however, took these tales, which were possibly popular in their time, and remolded them into a Jewish context. In the course of this action they kept the basic structure but added a new message. As well as saying that the deity (God) was all powerful, these reworkings reduced the other deities to positions of "prince", or angel.

The internal (Jewish) roots of a plurality of deities has as its origins in the ambiguities contained in the Genesis narrative. In several of the verses, describing the world's creation, God's name appears in the plural. In addition to this problem, which continued to haunt the rabbis (even up to today), other phrases and words suggested, to those who wanted to see them, a plurality of deities. These will be examined in further detail below.

The body of midrashim which deal with the plurality of deities contain an interesting phenomena. Unlike most

polemical midrashim, an entire unit of anti-dualism midrashim exist which state categorically their purpose. Rather than dealing with innuendo, or hidden messages, these midrashim come right out and say that they are disputing the idea of two (or more) powers. This might be attributed to two factors. On one level, such an approach might have been employed because the threat was so great that the message had to be conveyed speedily and directly. Following the same pattern, the rabbis might have decided to use such a style because the philosophy of dualism was making headway into the common populace, which didn't have the time or knowledge to delve into (or perhaps even understand the difficult) rabbinic hermeneutics.

I would also suggest an additional explanation for why the rabbis dealt directly with the problem. Unlike, many of the earlier theologic and esoteric problems that the rabbis faced, the problem of plural deities extended well into the medieval period. Later Christian-Jewish polemics often focused on the very same scriptural verses suggesting a plurality of deities (Gen. 1:1, 1:26). Consequently, earlier rabbinic arguments were used over and over again. Unlike the other polemical midrashim which served their purpose and faded into the background, these midrashim stayed at the forefront of rabbinic polemical thought. Even today, many of these same arguments are used in discussions with fundamentalist Christians.

In some cases, however, changes had to be made in order to appease the authorities. In tractate Sanhedrin we read:

> Our rabbis taught; Man was created alone {only one man was created}. And why so? That the Sadducees might not say: there are many ruling powers in Heaven. 47

In several early additions of this tractate Sadducee is replaced by minim, "heretics". Out of the fear that Christian authorities would see "heretics" as referring to themselves (since the biblical passage {Gen. 1:26} was used as a Christian prooftext) later rabbis probably initiated this change. Many other midrashim, however, have come down to us (virtually unchanged) still reflecting the tensions and emotions of these early polemical battles.

These midrashim contain for its reader, whether ancient, medieval or modern, a logical system of thought for arguing against the plurality of deities. Some of these midrashim directly state the problem:

> And God said: `LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE´(Gen 1:26)., Moses said: Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou furnish an excuse to the heretics? 48

Others simply supply the necessary counter argument:

> R. Simlai said: Wherever you find a point {apparently} supporting the heretics, you find the refutation at its side. 49

As can be clearly seen, both passages state clearly and categorically their ultimate purpose.

Rather than confronting this problem, however, some rabbis sought to ignore it.

> Another explanation: What is the force of `AND

> THE KING' (Prov. 24:21)? Make {God} King over you. `AND MEDDLE NOT WITH THEM THAT ARE GIVEN TO CHANGE' (Prov. loc. cit.): Do not meddle with those who declare that there is a second god. R. Judah b. Simon said: {Scripture says}, `AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT IN ALL THE LAND, SAITH THE LORD, TWO PARTS THEREIN SHALL BE CUT OFF AND DIE' (Zech. 13:8); the mouths that declare that there are two Powers shall be cut off and die. 50

Unlike those midrashim which advocated a strong rebuttal against the dualists this midrash shows a particular reluctance to enter into such a discussion. In its first segment it sets the premise by placing the reader under God's rule. The second segment, which is the primary message of the midrash, develops out of a word play. Quite ingeniously, the rabbis suggested that rather than reading shonim, "change" in the Proverbs verse one should instead read shniyim, "two" which can be done by removing the letter vav. Consequently, the verse then reads "And meddle not with them that are given to two [deities]." R. Judah b. Simon then added the Zechariah verse, with the understanding that one should read the "two parts" as referring to those who believe in two Powers. With this understanding it therefore follows that advocates this position will die.

Although many of the rabbis might have accepted this view, the environment probably demanded that they interact with those who held these heretical beliefs. Such interaction required a solid grounding in the Torah, as well, as the systems of thought that these groups

developed. Ultimately, the rabbis had to recognize that many of their problems, with these groups, derived from divergent interpretations of the Torah.

The problem of a duality of deities arose primarily from the biblical verses which referred to God in the plural form. In Genesis 1:1, and again in Genesis 1:26, God is referred to as Elohim. In Genesis 1:26 God also states, concerning the creation of man, na'aseh, "let us make", made bezalmenu, "in our image."

The rabbis used several techniques to combat the view that these texts referred to two gods. The most common argument was that the verb associated with the proper noun dictated the (singular or plural) status of the noun.

> Said R. Issac...no person can dispute and maintain that two powers gave the Torah or two powers created the world. For AND the Gods SPAKE is not written here, but, `AND GOD SPAKE [singular verb form] ALL THESE WORDS' (Ex. 20:1); IN THE BEGINNING the Gods CREATED is not written here, but `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED'. 51

The premise of this midrash is that in cases where God's name appears in the plural form (Elohim) the connected verb is always in the singular form. R. Issac shows this by bringing in a prooftext from Exodus 20:1. In this verse, the verb va'yidabear, "and He spoke", is in the singular form, whereas God's name is in the plural. This text, and others like it, therefore proved to R. Issac that the verb dictates the nature of the noun. Thus, in the case of

Genesis 1:1 it cannot be understood in anyway to imply several deities.

In a similar midrash, R. Simlai uses the same approach, but a different prooftext.

> The heretics asked R. Simlai: `How many deities created the world?´ `I and you must inquire of the first days [Maaseh Bereshit],´ replied he, as it is written, `FOR ASK NOW OF THE FIRST DAYS´ (Deut. 4:32). Not, `Since the day gods created {baru} man´ is written here, but god `CREATED´- bara (ib.). Then they asked him a second time: `Why is it written, `IN THE BEGINNING ELOHIM {plural} CREATED?´ IN THE BEGINNING baru ELOHIM is not written here,´ answered he, `but "BARA ELOHIM THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH."´ 52

The clever thing about Simlai´s prooftext is that it uses the same verb (bet, resh, aleph) as the verse (Genesis 1:1) which is ultimately being questioned. The midrash then continues with another example of the verb-noun relationship.

> R. Simlai said: Wherever you find a point {apparently} supporting the heretics [where God´s name appears in the plural form], you find the refutation at its side [the accompanying verb]. They [the heretics] asked him again: `What is meant by, "AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN?"´ `Read what follows,´ replied he: "AND gods created {wa-yibre´u) MAN´ is not written here, but `AND GOD CREATED- wa-yibra´ (Gen. 1:27). When they went out his disciples said to him: `Them [the heretics] you have dismissed with a mere makeshift [half an answer, for what about the remainder of the verse, "In our image"], but how will you answer us?´ He said to them: `In the past Adam was created from dust and Eve from Adam was created from Adam; but hence forth it shall be `IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS´ (Gen. 1:26); neither man without woman nor woman without man, and neither without the Divine Spirit. 53

The principal logic behind this midrash is the same as the previous ones; the verb dictates the status of the noun. The second half of the midrash, however, suggests some very interesting things. From the statement of Simlai's students we see that the heretics did not ask the next logical question, i.e., what about the remainder of the verse in which the verb na'aseh, "let us make" and the end of the sentence, be'ztalmenu, "our image" are also in the plural? The question therefore arises, why didn't they ask it? There might be several possible explanations why the heretics didn't ask this question.

Another midrash ascribed to R. Simlai, however, goes into greater detail and answers in a more direct fashion the challenges to Genesis 1:26.

> FOR WHAT GREAT NATION IS THERE, THAT HATH GOD SO NIGH UNTO THEM (Deut. 4:7). Some heretics asked R. Simlai: `How many powers created the world?' He replied: You and I, let us inquire into the record of creation [the six days of creation].' Said they to him: `Is it then written, In the beginning God created? [No!] It is written, IN THE BEGINNING **GODS** CREATED' (Gen 1:1). He [Simlai] replied: `Is it then written, They created? [No!] it is written, `HE CREATED.' And {further} is it written, "And the gods said said: Let there be a firmament; let the waters be gathered; let there be lights"? It is written, AND HE SAID.' When they came to the account of the sixth day they [the heretics] triumphantly said to him: `Behold it is written, LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE (Gen 1:26). He replied: `It is not written here, "And they created man in their image'" but, `AND GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS IMAGE' (Gen. 1:27). Said they to him: `But is is written, `FOR WHAT GREAT NATION IS THERE THAT HATH NO GODS SO NIGH {here the participle, too, is in the plural} UNTO THEM?' He replied: `Is it

> then written, "As the Lord our God is whenever we call upon them"? [No] It is written, `WHENEVER WE CALL UPON HIM´. (Deut. 4:7) 54

Using the premise that "wherever you find a point [apparently] supporting the heretics, you find a refutation at its side"[55] R. Simlai negates the potency of scriptural verses which allegedly support the idea of plural deities. Although the intention of this midrash is the show that Deuteronomy 4:7 does not give credence to the idea of several deities, the problem with Genesis 1:26 is also resolved. Unlike, the previous midrash, in which Simlai gave a more didactic explanation for plurality in Genesis 1:26, here he uses his own hermeneutic and cancels the plural innuendoes of verse 26 by showing that the following verse (27) identifies God in the singular.

Other rabbis were just as direct in their approach to dealing with the plural nature of Genesis 1:26. One midrash, which was cited above (page 36), states outright that this verse could be used by heretics. But, like the previous midrash it attempts to explain the plural nature of the biblical verse.

> R. Samuel b. Nahman said in R. Jonathan´s name: When Moses was engaged in writing the Torah, he had to write the work of each day. When he came to the verse, `AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN´, etc., he said: `Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou furnish an excuse to the heretics?´ `Write´ He replied; `whoever wishes to err may err [whoever wants to believe incorrectly in two deities may do so].´ `Moses,´ the Lord said to him, `this man I have created- do I not cause men both great and small to spring from him? Now if a

> great man comes to obtain permission {for a proposed act} from one that is less than he, he may say, "Why should I ask permission from my inferior!" Then they will answer him, "Learn from the Creator, who created all that is above and below, yet when He came to create man He took counsel with the ministering angels." 56

Rather than using grammatical arguments to deal with the pluralisms in biblical verse, this midrash suggests a different approach. Recognizing, that the verse says, "Let us" and "in our image" R. Samuel b. Nahman (citing R. Jonathan) interpreted the third person references to mean other entities which existed at the time of the creation of man. In this midrash he says they are the ministering angels. It is important to note, that this explanation was only valid for the plural references "Let us" and "in our image". Neither, R. Samuel b. Nahman nor any of the other rabbis would have used this approach to explain Elohim. 57

The ministering angles were not the only things used by the rabbis to explain the ambiguities of this biblical verse. A midrash, from Bereshit Rabbah, gives several alternative interpretations of who the "us" and "our" are.

> 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 has two advisors without whose knowledge {and consent} 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. R. Ammi said: He took counsel with His own heart...58

In addition to contradicting R. Samuel's interpretation

from the previous midrash, this passage gives three new explanations for "let us" and "our". The first two, like the previous one, explain the pluralism as external beings, whereas the last one, identifies it as internal, and a part of God. With the exception of the third one, God's heart, the other three (ministering angels, heaven and earth, and works of the days) were created by God, after the first phrase of the Bible ("In the beginning God created). Consequently, none could be understood, in the context of these midrashim, as deities or as explanations for Elohim, which existed before them.

The rabbis probably would have preferred for the Torah not to have contained these ambiguities. We saw in an earlier midrash how the rabbis had Moses verbalize their own objections about these potentially problematic verses. In their own way they attempted to reconcile the issues. Tractate Megillah records an interesting approach to the problem. In a discussion about the acceptance of Torah written in other languages the following tale was told about how the Septuagint came into existence.

> It is related of King Ptolomy that he brought together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two {separate} rooms, without telling them why he had brought them together, and he went in to each one of them and said to him, Translate {lit. write} for me the Torah of Moses your master. God then prompted each one of them and they all conceived the same idea and wrote for him, `God created in the beginning', I shall make man in image and likeness...'. 59

Albeit that the historicity of this tale is indeed

questionable, what is important here is the re-rendering of the scriptural passages. In its complete form, the passage contains several other biblical passages, all of which contain ambiguities and other problems.

The talmudic passage itself alleviates two major problems. In the first case, it states that the ambiguities, which were visible in the original hebrew, were not be visible in the vernacular. Consequently, only the educated would become aware of the problems and not the masses. Secondly, by having God directly responsible for this new translation the implication is that the translation records exactly what God meant in the Hebrew original.

Ultimately, the charges of the proponents of dualism, were rejected by the rabbis on the grounds that the Bible repeatedly stated that there is only one God. Earlier in this chapter, we saw how the shape of the letter beth was used to define Maaseh Bereshit. And yet, it was not limited to just that.

> What is the characteristic of the letter bet? It has a stroke which projects above and a stroke which extends back from its base. When the bet is asked: `Who created thee?´ it points to the stroke above, `He who is above created me.´ `And what is His name?´ With the extension on its base it points back {to the preceding letter alef: "The First"}- `THE LORD IS HIS NAME´. 60

The last part of this midrash refers to Isaiah 41:4; Who hath wrought and done it? He that called the generations

from the beginning. I. the Lord, who am first, and with the last am the same." Another midrash also uses this verse to teach the same message. In the case of this midrash, however, it states outright its primary intention.

> And it says: `WHO HATH WROUGHT AND DONE IT? HE THAT CALLED THE GENERATIONS FROM THE BEGINNING. I, THE LORD, WHO AM THE FIRST´, (Isa. 41:4). Rabbi Natan says: From this [verse] one can cite a refutation of the heretics who say: There are two Powers. For when the Holy One, blessed be He, stood up and exclaimed: `I am the Lord thy God´ (Ex. 20:2), was there any who stood up to protest against Him? If you should say that it was done in secret- but has it not been said: `I HAVE NOT SPOKEN IN SECRET´ (Isa. 45:19). 61

In his exegesis on the Isaiah verse, R. Natan maintained that there was no way for one to prove a duality of deities from the Bible. Since this verse said that the Lord was "the First", then there could be none before Him. He further states that if there was another entity why did it not challenge God when God declared "I am the Lord, Thy God". The silence, he would allege, confirms the presence of one deity. And in case someone might argue that the silence was due to God making the declaration in secret, R. Natan supplied a prooftext which showed that God does not speak in secret. Thus, according to these two midrashim one can only affirm the belief in one God and reject out of hand any notions of dual entities in the heavens.

# THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

## I. RABBINIC RESPONSES TO PREMUNDANE CREATION

Questions concerning what might have existed before the actual creation caused much consternation among the rabbis. The midrashim, dealing with the Genesis creation narrative, are replete with rabbinic attempts showing that God alone created the world without the assistance of angels (or other beings) or primeval matter. These two views were of primary importance to the rabbis and the theologic well-being of Judaism. To suggest that God was aided by other beings, in creating the world, threatened the very nature of God as an all knowing, all powerful entity. Similarly, to argue that God used materials (that God did not create) that were pre-existent and eternal limited the omnipotent nature of God. Of course, neither of these attitudes fit into the theologic and philosophical spheres of "normative" Judaism.

Although the rabbis were not against giving the angels a role in the creation of the world their influence was restricted. In every midrash in which the angels have a role, be it in the creation of the world or the creation of humans, it was purely in an advisory capacity. Never, were they directly involved in the creation process.[1]

As well as diminishing the role of angelic beings the rabbis sought to prove that God, alone, created the world. One way of proving this was to show that God was so

powerful that the creation of the world took little or no effort. This being the case, there would be no need for the help of other entities. One midrash took the Hebrew phrase "behibbaram", "When they were created" (Gen. 2:4) and read it in the active form (by separating it into two words) "b´hey b´ream", "with the hey God created them".

> WHEN THEY WERE CREATED-BEHIBBARAM. R. Abbahu said in R. Johanan´s name: He created them with the letter hey. All letters demand an effort to pronounce them, whereas the hey demands no effort (being a mere aspirate); similarly, not with labor or wearying toil did the Holy One. blessed be He, create His world, but `BY THE WORD OF THE LORD´ (Ps. 33:6), and `THE HEAVENS WERE already MADE´ (Ps. 33:6). 2

Whereas this midrash uses the letter hey to prove that God created the world with little effort, others offer an alternative approach. In these midrashim the rabbis alleged that God created the world solely through command. No physical or material labor was necessary. Rather, the rabbis suggested, God created the parts of the world with ten declarations of "Va´yomer Elohim", "And God said". Thus, instead of the world being created by crafting and shaping, it was created by means of a simple statement; i.e., it did not exist, then God stated that it existed, and it became.

> R. Johanan said: By ten utterances was the created. What are these? The expression "AND GOD SAID" in the first chapter of Genesis. But there are only nine? The words "IN THE BEGINNING" are also a (creative) utterance, since it is written, `BY THE WORD OF THE LORD THE HEAVENS WERE MADE, AND ALL THE HOST OF

THEM BY THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH' (Ps. 33:6) 3

When viewed in conjunction with the previous midrash an interesting pattern develops. As is obvious, both passages utilize the biblical verse from the book of Psalms. One could therefore, read the biblical passage to include the premises of both texts. This is to say, that "By the word of the Lord" referred to the "ten utterances" while the "breath of His mouth" (which makes a silent sound) alluded to the letter "hey (which also makes a silent sound).

Parallel versions of this midrash are found in several other rabbinic collections. The above version, from the talmudic tractate Megillah, (and paralleled in tractate Rosh Hashanah 32a) is the shortest of the versions. It does not enumerate the biblical verses which contain the phrase "And God said". The parallel versions in Bereshit Rabbah 17:1 and the Avot deRabbi Natan, however, include the biblical passages. But, it is of interest to note, the two lists of ten utterances are not the same.

Both Bereshit Rabbah and Avot de Rabbi Natan agree on eight of the verses: "And God said: Let there be light (1:3), And God said: Let there be a firmament (1:6), And God said: Let the waters be gathered together (1:9), And God said: Let the earth put forth vegetation (1:11), And God said: Let there be lights (1:14), And God said: Let the waters swarm (1:20), And God said: Let the earth bring forth (1:24), And God said: Let us make man (1:26)." The passage from Bereshit Rabbah includes "In the beginning"

(Gen. 1:1) and "the spirit (ruah) of God hovered" (1:20). These two should be "interpreted as though they read: In the beginning God said, `Let there be heaven and earth´; and God said, `Let there be ruah´."[4] The end of the passage informs us that no consensus was reached on Genesis 1:20. The midrash states that:

> Menachem b. Jose excluded, `AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERED OVER THE FACE OF THE WATERS,´ and included, `AND THE LORD SAID: IT IS NOT GOOD THAT MAN SHOULD BE ALONE´ (Gen. 2:18).

The passage from the Avot deRabbi Natan, unlike the talmudic passages and the midrash from Bereshit Rabbah, omits "In the beginning" and includes two different verses. It is of interest to note that the excluded verse (Gen. 2:18) is the very one included by Menachem b. Jose in Bereshit Rabbah.

> `AND GOD SAID: "BEHOLD I HAVE GIVEN" (I:29).´ .....AND GOD SAID: "IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE" (2:18).´ Rabbi Jeremiah used to include: `SO GOD CREATED THE GREAT SEA MONSTERS...´(1:21) and exclude the verse: `IT IS NOT GOOD THAT MAN SHOULD BE ALONE´ (2:18). [5]

God´s creation of the world, with little effort, is the common denominator of these passages. At the same time the message is conveyed by the rabbis that even with God´s infinite power, God took the time to create the world in stages (as exemplified by the "ten utterances") instead of in one solitary action.

The charge was leveled against the rabbis and the God of the Jews that God had created the world with the help of

entities. These entities were proposed by either dissident Jewish groups, gnostic or heretical religions, or outside philosophies. One common charge was that God created the world with the help of Tohu and bohu (Gen. 1:1). The ramifications of this accusation were of major importance. Without question this allegation called into question the entire nature of the creation.

In the previous chapter we saw how many of the debates that the rabbis participated in concerned the inherent goodness of the creation. In Bereshit Rabbah 1:5 tohu and bohu were associated with evil. It was therefore inferred that if the world was created out of them, then the world also had to be evil.[6] Similarly, if God created the world with the assistance of tohu and bohu (which were evil) then by analogy the world was also evil. The use of tohu and bohu led to another problem. If God was assisted by tohu and bohu then the conclusion could have been drawn that God was not omnipotent and needed the help of another, or other entities.

Before exploring how the rabbis responded to these theologic challenges it is necessary to briefly discuss how tohu and bohu gained such positions of prominence. According to the Genesis narrative: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (1:1). Now the earth was unformed (Tohu) and void (Bohu) and darkness was upon the face of the deep (1:2)." If we examine this passage we find

that the earth and the heavens were stated as having been created, but not tohu, bohu, and the darkness (Hoshesh). Since their creation was not explicitly stated, it was suggested that perhaps they existed before the creation.

Such a notion was not foreign to the people of this period. For many centuries, the question of pre-existent matter occupied the great philosophers of Greece and the Near East. From Thales to Aristotle, Philo and later to Maimonidies, the quest for this information was perpetuated. It would be irresponsible to suggest that some of these ideas did not permeate into the world and thought of the rabbis. Whether they were accepted outright, reinterepted to fit within the boundaries of the Jewish view or ignored depends upon the specific historic period and the individuals.

The midrashim from the period of the Tannaim and the Amoraim reflect the attitude that these ideas, in their classical sense, were foreign and threatening to Judaism. Therefore they had to be opposed and argued against. One such passage, attributed to R. Gamaliel, records such conflict. In many cases the name of the rabbi is relatively insignificant, but I would propose that by attributing this midrash to the famous Gamaliel the rabbis indicated the seriousness of this problem.

> A certain philosopher asked R. Gamaliel, saying to him: `Your God was indeed a great artist, but surely He found good materials to assist Him?' `What are they?,' said he [Gamaliel] to him. Tohu, bohu, darkness,

> water, wind (ruah), and the deep,' replied he. `May your spirit blow away' [`may you die'] he exclaimed. `The term "creation" ["b'reiah"] is used by Scripture in connection with all of them.' Tohu and bohu: `I MAKE PEACE AND CREATE EVIL' (Isa. 45:7); darkness: `I FORM THE LIGHT, AND CREATE DARKNESS' (Ibid.); water: `PRAISE HIM, YE HEAVENS OF HEAVENS, AND YE WATERS THAT ARE ABOVE THE HEAVENS' (Ps. 148:4)- wherefore [do we derive from this verse that the waters were also created]? `FOR HE COMMANDED, AND THEY WERE CREATED' (Ps. 148:5); wind: `FOR, LO, HE THAT FORMETH THE MOUNTAINS AND CREATETH THE WIND' (Amos 4:13); the depths: `WHEN THERE WERE NO DEPTHS, I WAS BROUGHT FORTH' (Prov. 8:24). 7

The rabbinic acknowledgement of pre-existent matter is demonstrated in this passage. But, nevertheless, the midrash limits the importance of this same matter.

In the first verse of the midrash we are given some very interesting information. Even though the philosopher referred to God as "Your God" he did, in fact, admit to accepting the premise that God created the world. Similarly, Gamaliel admits to accepting the philosophic principle of "pre-existent matter", albeit in a limited capacity.

An added dimension should also be considered. If we change the title "philosopher" to "heretic", then the focus of the midrash would change. Rather than arguing solely about the omnipotence of God, questions about the nature of the world, (as good or evil), would also surface. Such a view is not so far fetched if we think back to Bereshit Rabbah 1:5 (see Chapter One) where tohu and bohu were seen as evil entities. The above midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 1:9)

even says that bohu refers to evil. Nonetheless, the main thrust of the midrash concerns the existence of primeval matter.

Gamaliel expressed little problem, as recorded in this midrash, in accepting the existence of primeval matter. Where he differed from the philosopher, however, was that he placed it under the spectrum of God's creation rather than on a level par with God (existing with God). He did this by finding scriptural passages which stated categorically that God created the different primordial materials. Gamaliel thus proposed that it was well within the realm of rabbinic thought to believe in primordial matter, but that such materials had to be considered as created by God and not existing prior.

The above midrash cites tohu, bohu, darkness, water, wind (ruah) and the deep as creation's primeval elements. Whether these were in fact the elements that the rabbis accepted or were just those that the "philosopher" asked about is unclear. It is probable that these were selected by the "philosopher" because they were never defined, in the Genesis narrative, as having been created. Rather they just existed.

Other rabbis readily accepted the concept of created primeval matter, but differed as to what it consisted of.

> R. Nehemiah of Sirkin said: `FOR SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE THE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA [read water], AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM' (Ex. 20:11): these three things constitute the fundamental

> elements of the creation; they each waited three days and produced three things. The earth was created on the first day, according to Beth Hillel, waited three days, viz., the first, second, and third, and brought forth three generations: trees, herbs, and the Garden of Eden. The firmament {heaven} was created on the second, waited three days, viz., the second, third, and fourth, and brought forth three generations: the sun, moon, and constellations. The seas were created on the third day, tarried three days, viz., the third, fourth, and fifth, and produced three generations: birds, fish and the Leviathan. R. Azariah, however, maintained: It is not so, but `IN THE DAY THAT THE LORD MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN´ (Gen. 2:4) teaches that two things constitute the fundamental elements of creation and they waited three days and their work was completed on the fourth day. Heaven was created on the first day, as maintained by Beth Shammai; then it waited three days, viz., the first, second, and third, and its work was completed on the fourth. And what was the completion of its work? The luminaries, which were what the world lacked, as it is said, `AND GOD SET THEM IN THE FIRMAMENT OF THE HEAVEN´ (Gen. 1:7). The essential creation of the earth was on the third day, as it is said, `AND THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH´ (Gen. 1:12); also, `AND LET THE DRY LAND APPEAR´ (Gen. 1:9). It waited three days, viz., the third, fourth, and fifth, and its work was completed on the sixth day. And what was the completion of its work? Man, as it is written, `I, EVEN I, HAVE MADE THE EARTH, AND CREATED MAN UPON IT´ (Isa. 45:12). 8

Of all the midrashim examined this one defined the process that the elements underwent, in creating the world, in the most complete manner. Where others interpreted specific words (see below) or implied that God used other entities to create the world, this specific midrash described in great detail how everything was created out of these three elements (heaven, earth and sea).

A midrash, in the collection Shemot Rabbah, offers a different list of primeval elements.

> Three things preceded the creation of the world--water, wind and fire. The waters conceived and gave birth to thick darkness; the fire conceived and gave birth to light; the wind conceived and gave birth to wisdom, and with these six things the world is maintained: with wind, wisdom, fire, light, darkness, and water. 9

In light of these different midrashim we can conclude that there was at least a limited rabbinic acceptance towards a modified and Jewishly acceptable concept of pre-existent matter. These midrashim also indicate that general rabbinic consensus on specifically what these elements were did not exist. Whereas the midrash from Bereshit Rabbah defined them as tohu, bohu, darkness, water, wind, and the deep, the passage from Shemot Rabbah proposed that they were water, wind and fire. While both record water and wind as primeval elements, the remainder are different.

It would appear that in most of the rabbinic insights, about pre-existent matter, water is a primary source. It is possible that they were influenced by Greek philosophy. Classical Greek philosophy saw the world as originating out of water. Later, even this, too, changed. Thales' view, as preserved by Aristotle, was later expanded to include the elements; air, fire and earth.[10] Similarly, many rabbis saw water as the principal element. The tractate Haggigah suggested that Heaven came from water because when the Hebrew word for heaven (shamayim) is broken apart it can

mean "There is water" (sham "there is" mayim "water").[11] A midrash from Bereshit Rabbah created a more detailed and elaborate explanation.

> R. Issac said: {Shamayim means} sa-mayim, i.e. be laden with water. Compare this to milk in a bowl: before a drop of rennet falls in it, it quivers, but as soon as a drop of rennet falls into it, it immediately curdles and stands still. Similarly, `THE PILLARS OF HEAVEN QUIVER´ (Job 26:2); then the solidifying substance was infused into them, whereupon, `AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING, A SECOND DAY´ (Gen. 1:8). That agrees with Rab´s dictum: {God´s} handiwork was liquid and on the second day it congealed.[12]

This midrash separates heaven´s creation into two steps. The first step involved God´s making heaven out of a quivering, and non-solid entity; water. The second stage, and that which is described as the second day, encompassed the solidifying of the non-solid entity (the water). Thus, God created heaven out of solidified water.

The idea of water as the primary element of the heavens was not without dispute.

> SHAMAYIM: {It is so called} because men wonder {mishtommemim} at it, saying: `Of what (shel mah} is it composed? Of fire? Of water?´ II R. Phinehas said in R. Levi´s name: It {Scripture} comes and explains it: `WHO LAYEST THE BEAMS OF THINE UPPER CHAMBERS IN THE WATERS´ (Ps. 104:3): this shows that it is of water.[13]

This passage opens with a dispute concerning whether the heavens were created out of fire or water. As will be seen in several midrashim below, fire was often discerned to have been one of the primary elements in heaven. This midrash, however, sought to separate them. This could

perhaps be due to an understanding (which is never explicitly stated in rabbinic literature) that fire was a destructive force and thus evil. But, like the Bereshit Rabbah passage (4:17) it concludes that the heavens were created out out of water, and not fire.

Not everyone agreed that water was the only element from which the heavens were created. Several midrashim indicate a rabbinic willingness to include fire as co-entity in heaven's creation. This primordial fire, however, should not be understood as the same fire utilized by humankind. According to the Pirke deRabbi Eleazar[14] fire was created on the second day of the creation while tractate Pesachim saw its creation as coming after the conclusion of the Sabbath.[15] I would advocate that these were the fires created for human usage, and not the fire expounded upon in connection with pre-existent matter.

Those midrashim which acknowledge fire as a primary element saw it interacting with water. Nowhere in rabbinic literature, is it referred to (as is water) as the only element in the creation of heaven. There are several reasons why fire might have been thought of as being a primary component of heaven. The most obvious, is that it was adapted from classical Greek sources (and put in a Jewish context). The second might have to do with the phenomena of lightning. It is not unreasonable to conceive of the fear that ancient peoples felt towards lightning.

Originating in the sky (from the realm of God) it shot to the earth. Fires often began. Observations of this phenomena might have led to its place among the primordial elements. the earth where fires often begin where it strikes. A third possibility is that when it burns, it ascends towards the heavens. Whatever the reason some rabbis definitely saw it as one of heaven's original ingredients.

> In a Baraitha it is taught: {It [Shamayim] means}, `fire and water'; this teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, brought them and mixed them one with the other and made from them the firmament. 16

This baraitha introduced fire by using the same methodology previously used to prove water as the only element. Whereas, the first part of this talmudic passage (Haggigah 12a) separated the Hebrew word shamayim into sham mayim ("there is water"), this baraitha deliniates it differently: esh ("fire") and mayim ("water"). In order to make this change, however, the rabbis had to add the letter alef to the shin. The same idea is found in a parallel version of this baraitha, attributed to Rab and R. Abba b. Kahana, in Bereshit Rabbah.[17]

The above midrashim indicate that some rabbis accepted the premise that certain things existed before the creation of the world. Nonetheless, they did not give credence to the idea that these things were eternal. Thus, the Jewish compromise (if we can call it this) with classical Greek systems was to deem the elements as viable and primary

parts of the creation, but not as equals to the Deity. One way, the rabbis lessened the importance of these pre-existent materials was to suggest that they were not the only things which existed prior to the creation.

Several midrashim speak of the Torah as existing before the creation of the world. Some of these also see the Torah (like the primeval elements) as a tool which God used in creating the world. In the previous chapter we explored the rabbinic attempts to prove the inherent goodness of the world and the entirety of creation. One of the basic techniques used was to connect the creation to those things which emanated from God.[18] Since, to the rabbinic mind, the Torah was seen as inherently good, it made complete sense to associate the Creation with Torah. In some of these midrashim the Torah is seen as a tool.

> R. Menahem and R. Joshua b. Levi said in the name of R. Levi: A builder requires six things: water, earth, timber [etzim], stones, canes [kanim], and iron. And even if you say, He is wealthy and does not need canes [see note], yet he surely requires a measuring rod, as it is written, AND A MEASURING REED IN HIS HAND (Ezek. 40:3). Thus the Torah preceded {the creation of the world} by these six things, viz., kedem {`the first´}, me-az {`of old´}, me-olam {`from everlasting´}, me-rosh {`from the beginning´}, and mi-lekadim {`or ever´}, which counts as two.[19]

In this midrash we find the Torah identified as the "measuring reed" that God used in creating the world. Playing on Proverbs 8:22-23: "The Lord made me as the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old. I was

set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was", the rabbis concluded that the Torah was the reshit ("beginning") that was described in the verse. Therefore, this midrash implied that Genesis 1:1, "Bereshit bara Elohim" ("In the beginning God created") should be read: B´ reshit bara Elohim ("with reshit/ the Torah God created").

A different understanding of the verse sees "me" as referring to the Torah. The verse would then read: "The Lord made the Torah (`me´) as the beginning of His way." The book of Proverbs was utilized by R. Oshaya to create a similar analogy.

> R. Oshaya commenced {his exposition thus}: `THEN I WAS BY HIM, AS A NURSLING (amon); AND I WAS DAILY ALL DELIGHT´ (Prov. 8:30)...Another interpretation: `amon´ is a workman (uman). The Torah declares: `I was the working tool of the Holy One, blessed be He.´ In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED´ (Gen. 1:1), `BEGINNING´ refers to the Torah, as in the verse, `THE LORD MADE ME [the Torah] AS THE BEGINNING OF HIS WAY´ (Prov. 8:22). 20

Like the previous text, this passage uses a parable of a mortal builder to teach that God used the Torah as a tool for building the world. The purpose of the parable is to prove that one (God) can be omnipotent and still use aids, whatever the task.

A condensed version of this midrash, found in Shir HaShirim Rabbah, details the other motive behind this midrash.[21] This passage, utilizes both Proverbs 8:22 and 8:30 to show that the Torah preceded the creation of the world by two thousand years. The rabbis based this dating on the phrase Yom, Yom, ("daily", literally, "day, day") (Prov. 8:30). According to the midrash one of God's days equals one thousand human years. Consequently, since the verse repeats yom twice it must imply two days or two thousand years. The exact number of years, however, is not the major point of the passage. The primary theme is that the Torah exited prior to the creation of the world.

A midrash from Pirke deRabbi Eleazar also recognized the Torah as having existed before the creation of the world. But it assigns the Torah a different role. Rather than being a tool of God's it instead acts as a counselor.

> Immediately, the Holy One, blessed be He, took counsel with the Torah whose name is Tushijah {Stability or wisdom} with reference to the creation of the world.... The Torah spake: The Holy One, blessed be He, took counsel with me concerning the creation of the, as it it said: `COUNSEL IS MINE, AND SOUND KNOWLEDGE; I AM UNDERSTANDING; I HAVE MIGHT' (Prov. 8:14). 22

Like the above midrashim, this particular midrash again uses the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs to prove that the Torah existed prior to the creation of the world. The approach differs, however, in that it uses verse fourteen, and defines the Torah as a counselor of God instead of a tool. But, like the previous midrashim, the

purpose of the Torah is not the main point of the passage but rather, the idea that the Torah existed before this world's creation.

The Torah was not the only entity that the rabbis envisioned as having existed before the creation. The talmudic tractate Pesachim, contains a list of seven things, and their scriptural proofs, which God created (and that existed) before implementing the world's creation.[23] The seven are; The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple and the name of the Messiah. The English translation notes:

> the general idea of this baraitha is that these things are indespensible pre-requisites for the orderly progress of mankind upon earth. The Torah, the supreme source of instruction; the concept of repentance, in recognition that `to err is human', and hence, if man falls, the opportunity to rise again; the Garden of Eden and Gehenna, symbolizing reward and punishment; the Throne of Glory and the Temple, indicating that the goal of Creation is that the Kingdom of God {represented by the Temple} shall be established on earth, as it is in heaven, and finally, the name of the Messiah, i.e., the assurance that god's ultimate purpose will ultimately be achieved. 24

There was not, however, even a rabbinic consensus on these seven things. A midrash, from Bereshit Rabbah, states that only six things preceded the creation of the world, and out of these only two were actually created.[25] The remainder were only contemplated by God. The two things created before the world were the Torah and the Throne of Glory.

The latter half of the midrash records a dispute which

arose concerning which came first, the Torah or the Throne of Glory. Ultimately, R. Abba b. Kahanna, basing his judgement on Proverbs 8:22, decided that the Torah was created before the Throne of Glory. The remaining things, which were contemplated, but not created before the world were: the creation of the Patriarchs, Israel, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. R. Ahabah b. R. Ze`ira added repentance to the list. According to "R. Huna, reporting in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Issac: The intention to create Israel preceded everything else."[26]

The Avot deRabbi Natan also reflects the fluidity of rabbinic thought on this issue. One passage states that ten things were contemplated before the creation of the world.

> Ten things were originally planned: Jerusalem, the spirits of the Patriarchs, the light of the righteous, Gehenna, the waters of the flood, the two tables of commandments, the Shabbat, the Temple, the Ark [containing the Tables of the Law] and the light of the world to come. 27

As is readily apparent several of the things mentioned in this midrash were previously cited by other midrashim. Nonetheless, this list includes a preponderance of new things (i.e., the light of the righteous, the Ark, etc.). The addition of these new items, the inclusion of some of the previously mentioned things, and the exclusion of some of the others clearly indicates that a set list of pre-creation items was never concretized. This might suggest that the rabbis were probably more interested in the

concept of many things preceding the creation (and thus limiting the importance of the basic four elements) and not so concerned with the specifics of what these things actually were.

## II. THE RABBINIC REJECTION OF PRE-EXISTENT ENTITIES

A belief in pre-existent entities was not held to be true by all rabbis. The basic mode used to attack the views and the proponents of pre-existent matter was to prove that these things were created on either the first day, or during the entirety of the creation process. In the Talmud we find the following passage:

> Rab Judah further said that Rab said: Ten things were created the first day, and they are as follows: heaven and earth, tohu, bohu, light and darkness, wind and water, the measure of day and the measure of night. 28

Whereas in some of the above midrashim most of these elements exited prior to the worlds creation, this passage assigns them to the first day of creation. Using as its scriptural proof, Genesis 1:1-2, this passage takes the verse literally. Thus, it understands each of these things to have been created exactly as the Torah states.

A midrash, from Pirke deRabbi Eleazar, suggests that only eight things were created on the first day.[29] Like the previous midrash, this one includes heaven, earth, light, darkness, tohu, bohu, wind and water, but omits the measure

of day and the measure of night. This could be due to their dubious nature. Whereas the other entities' creation are definitely tied to a phrase in the Genesis narrative, these two were both assigned by the Talmud to the phrase "and there was evening and there morning one day." It is possible that the reason they were even included was because every other phrase in the verse was associated with an entity. Thus it made sense to find created entities for this phrase.

A midrash from Bereshit Rabbah sought to limit even further the number of things created on the first day.[30] In this passage, the rabbis suggested that God created just three things (six things on the sixth day) on each day. On the first day, God created heaven, earth and light. Many of the things that the above midrashim associated with having been created before the world (i.e., Gehenna, the Garden of Eden and the firmament) were relegated to the later days of creation. As well as deliniating the creation hierarchy, this midrash, by inference, also refutes the notion that entities existed before the world's genesis.

## III. THE ORDER OF CREATION

Although the Genesis narrative (in the Torah) is quite explicit in the order of creation the rabbis found some internal inconsistencies. The discussions which arose from these focused on the surface with the correct order of the

creation, but in reality probably camouflaged deeper issues and rifts.

According to Genesis 1:1 the heavens were created before the earth ("In the beginning the heavens and the earth were created"). But in Genesis 2:4 the order is reversed: "In the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven." This led to a major conflict between Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai.

> Our Rabbis taught: Beth Shammai say: Heaven was created first and afterwards the earth was created, for it is said: `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH´ (Gen. 1:1). Beth Hillel say: earth was created first and afterwards heaven, for it is said: `IN THE DAY THAT THE LORD MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN´ (Gen. 2:4). Beth Hillel said to Beth Shammai: According to your view, a man builds the upper story {first} and afterwards builds the house! For it is said: `IT IS HE THAT BUILDETH HIS UPPER CHAMBERS IN THE HEAVEN AND HATH FOUNDED HIS VAULT UPON THE EARTH´ (Amos 9:6). Said Beth Shammai to Beth Hillel: According to your view, a man makes the footstool {first}, and afterwards he makes the throne! For it is said: Thus saith the Lord, `THE HEAVEN IS MY THRONE AND THE EARTH MY FOOTSTOOL´ (Isa. 66:1). But the sages say: Both were created at the same time. For it is said: `YEA, MINE HAND HATH LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND MY RIGHT HAND HATH SPREAD OUT THE HEAVENS: WHEN I CALL UNTO THEM THEY STAND UP TOGETHER´ (Isa. 48:13). And the others {what do Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai say to the sages}? What is the meaning of `TOGETHER´? {It means} that they cannot be loosened from one another. However, the verses contradict one another!- Resh Lakish answered: When they were created, He created heaven {first}, and afterwards He created the earth; but when He stretched them forth He stretched the earth {first}, and afterwards He stretched forth heaven. 31

There are several versions of this particular dispute.32

Although some are more complete than others, and composed in a slightly different fashion, they all record Beth Shammai as believing that heaven was created first, and Beth Hillel the converse.[33]

In one of the shorter versions of this midrash R. Simeon b. Yohai asked the question: "How could the fathers of the world, Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel, differ..?"[34] Through a careful analysis of the midrash we might be able to suggest a possible answer.

The passage begins with both Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel stating their opening positions and the scriptural proof-texts for these positions. When this approach failed to convince the other, a new technique was utilized. Again using parallel techniques both schools brought in parables which attempted to show the illogical nature of the others view.

Beth Hillel argued that Beth Shammai seemed to advocate that one should build either the upper floors (or the roof) before the house (or the base) was itself built. Beth Shammai countered with a similar argument. They proposed that Beth Hillel's view contended that one should make a footstool before the throne (which is lesser part of throne) was made. Neither school, in this version of the midrash, directly answered the other's challenge.

In a version of the midrash as recorded in Leviticus Rabbah, the challenges were responded to. In an interesting

switch, both schools answered the challenge as expressed in the first part of the midrash (where they both state their point of view and the scriptural proof-texts) by reversing the parables used above. Thus, Beth Shammai argued "that the matter (of heaven before earth) may be compared to the case of a king who made himself a throne and having completed it he made himself a footstool for it."[35] Similarly, Beth Hillel reasoned that "the matter (of earth before heaven) may be compared to the case of the king who built a palace. After having built the lower stories he builds the upper ones."[36]

The talmudic version (Haggigah 12a) continued with attempts by the sages to reconcile the conflict. They sought to show, through the verse from Isaiah that both heaven and earth were created together. A commentary on this passage suggests that "together" should be understood as referring to "their physical structure and not their time of origin."[37] The midrash concludes with Resh Lakish answering the charge that the verses (from Isaiah) contradict each other.

It would appear that both the Sages and Resh Lakish took this conflict between Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai quite seriously. But, we must ask, did they really resolve the conflict? Secondly, and more importantly, did they really understand the conflict? Were Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai so concerned with whether the earth or heaven actually came first, or was this debate symbolic of a much

deeper issue?

Throughout rabbinic literature, Hillel and Beth Hillel are portrayed as lenient when it comes to the law, while Shammai and Beth Shammai are seen as stringent.[38] Whether this was true, or is just how literature preserved (and shaped) these individuals and groups is beyond the scope of this study. But, if these characterizations are reliable then perhaps the above debate reflects something of greater significance.

During the period that these men, their respective schools, and their contemporaries, lived, Jewish life and law underwent major changes. Moving from the (antedated) enactments of the Torah, the rabbis of this time (the first century C.E.) sought to interpret the laws of the Torah and make them more viable for the environment. Much of the discussion which took place is recorded in the Mishnah and the Tosefta. A key component of these legal (and moral/ethical) forums centered on how much of the Torah could be changed or modified. To the strict interpreters, who proposed a more literalistic understanding of the Torah, change was limited. For the lenient ones, however, change was more acceptable.

In the light of these observations it might be possible to declare that, in fact, Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai were arguing about the amount of change permitted. For Beth Shammai, the creation of heaven first served as a symbol

for the heavenly nature of the Torah. Although Beth Shammai advocated change, the change had to be more stringent, because as human beings the rabbis had less authority to interpret a Torah (whose really authority dwelt in heaven). Conversely, by seeing the earth as having been created first, Beth Hillel alleged that the Torah belonged on the earth and was therefore more receptive to human interpretation.

## IV. THE LAST MOMENT OF CREATION

God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. This is the general understanding of the Genesis creation narrative. But, for the rabbis, it wasn't so simple. Some rabbis envisioned the world as having been completed in this time frame, found support for an additional hour, while still others argued that the world was never completed.

In an earlier midrash, it was suggested that each day of God's creation equalled one thousand human years.[39] As one of the last acts of creation, some rabbis alleged, God created a new system of time.

> HA-SHISHI (1:31): R. Simon said: There came a weakening {metash} of the Creation: hitherto world time was counted, but henceforth we count it by a different reckoning. 40

The Torah referred to the first five days of creation without the definite article (hey). The sixth day, however, included the hey which led to the question; Why? R. Simon

(and the rabbis who preserved this midrash) argued that the superfluous hey represented the Hebrew hatesh ("weaken") and indicated a weakening, or lessening of the existing time system. Whereas, previously, time was seen as the first, second, third and fourth day of the **creation**, it was now seen as the first, second, third and fourth day of the **week**. It was therefore, in the last moments of creation that God created time as we now know it.

Another interpretation, of the hey from ha-shishi, suggested that the extra hour was created by God in order to separate the holy from the profane. At the same time, this extra hour allowed God to finish the work of the creation.[41]

Additional midrashim cite other things which were created in the last minutes of the creation. The Avot deRabbi Natan suggests that ten things were created in these last moments.

> Ten things were created at twilight [hashmashot]: The rainbow, the comets, the clouds, the well, the manna, the Rod, the mouth of the earth, the ass's power of speech, the staff of Aaron, and the cave. And some say: Also the burial place of Moses or master and the ram of Abraham our father. Rabbi Nathan [Natan] says: the writing, the stylus and the tables of the commandments. Rabbi Joshua says: also clothes of skin and the Shamir. Rabbi Nehemiah says: Also fire and the mule. 42

This is just one version of such a list. The Midrash Tanhumma, the Mechilta deRabbi Simeon ben Yohai and Sifre-Deuteronomy all contain similar lists, but with some

variations.[43] Contained within these lists are mainly things of great significance to the Torah, but which were never specifically mentioned as having been created. Consequently, the "rainbow" comes from the story of Noah (Gen. 9:13), the "clouds" possibly symbolize the pillar which led the children from Egypt (Ex. 13:21) and the "manna" was the food fed to the Israelites in the desert.[44] Since these things were so important to the Torah, and the rabbis, it is well within the realm of feasibility that the rabbis deemed it necessary that each thing needed to be designated as having been created. For anyone who charged that these were created by humans, or were within the realm of the mundane, the rabbis needed a defense. By placing the various things' creation at the last moment the rabbis were able to declare that everyone of these things was divinely created.

Albeit there were rabbis who declared that by the end of the sixth day, the work of creation was as complete as had been planned. Reacting to groups which claimed the existence of other gods, these rabbis proposed that God had purposely left part of the world incomplete.

> Four quarters [ruchot] have been created in the world; the quarter facing the east, that facing the south, that facing the west and that facing the north....From the quarter facing north darkness goeth forth into the world. The quarter facing north He created, but He did not complete it, for He said, Anyone who says: I am God, let him come and complete this quarter which I have left

{incomplete} and all will know that he is a God. 45

The emphasis of this passage appears to be focused against heretical and gnostic groups. In the passage, it is stated that the only quarter which was left incomplete was the one in the north. It is interesting to note that darkness emitted from this quarter; which is often used synonymously with evil. Hence, it stands to reason that the passage declared that the only one who could complete this quarter, or perhaps, rid the world of evil, was indeed a god. Thus, anyone who argued that their God was superior had to prove it through this task.

# THE CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN

## I. GOD'S DESIRE TO CREATE MAN AND WOMAN

The last act of creation was that of man and woman. And yet, the plan to create humans, preceded the entire creation process. The creation of humans was seen not only as the culmination of the creation, but the sole purpose for creation.[1] As was indicated in the previous chapter, the world's creation as depicted in the Torah was implemented in an orderly fashion. When necessary the rabbis filled in what they felt were apparent gaps. Similarly, the creation of man and woman necessitated that certain lacunae be filled.

The underlying premise, of many of the midrashim concerning the creation of man and woman, seeks to connect man and woman to God. Rather than seeing man and woman (past and present) as just one random part of the creation, the rabbis sought to prove that they had an important role in this world. Thus, whenever they sin, the relationship between God and them, and the relationship between this world and God is set asunder.

In order to prove the interconnectedness between God and humans, the rabbis interpreted the biblical verses in a manner which emphasized this relationship. Instead of just using "in our image" (Gen. 1:26), which by itself affirmed the bond between humans and God, the rabbis developed and

interpreted other verses from the Bible to reemphasize the point. In other cases they stated categorically that the relationship existed.

> R. Samuel b. Ammi said: From the beginning of the world's creation the Holy One, blessed be He, longed to enter into a relationship with the mortals. 2

Another midrash maintained that God not only longed for a relationship with humans, from the beginning of creation, but also prepared the world for their creation.

> R. Huna said in R. Aibu's name: He [God] created him [humans] with due deliberation: He first created his food requirements, and only then did He create him. 3

Both these midrashim exemplify God's intention and contemplation of creating man and woman. But, rabbinic literature also records an active resistance towards the humans' creation.

## II. THE MINISTERING ANGELS AND THEIR REACTIONS TO THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS.

There are numerous midrashim which document the different reactions that the angels held towards the creation of man and woman. They represent the spectrum of attitudes. Some support the creation while others reject it. These passages also reflect the diverse perceptions of how the angels viewed human beings. More importantly, they show the overwhelming bias that God felt towards the creation of humans.

The creation of humans narrative lent itself to the incorporation of an angelic presence. Genesis 1:26, which detailed the creation of the first human (I will be using this term rather than man because many of the midrashim defined the first person as a hermaphrodite) states: "And God said: `Let us make {na´aseh} man {adam} in our image {b´ztalmenu}.´" As is apparent, both the subject ("Let us") and the prepositional phrase ("in our image") are in the plural. In a large number of midrashim the rabbis interpreted the plural references to mean angels.[4]

In one group of parallel midrashim, the angels readily accepted that God was going to create a human.[5] What is particularly interesting about this series of texts is that they all indicate that God told the angels that humans were going to have more wisdom than they. Even with this information, the angels did not oppose God´s desire. That the angels didn´t oppose God in these midrashim runs counter to another group of passages where the angels heartily opposed God´s plan. An explanation for this incongruity might be that the various midrashim are meant to teach different messages. In the first group, the primary lesson appears to be that humans have great knowledge and because of this they shall have dominion over the wild life. The second group teaches something entirely different (which will be examined below).

FOR HE WAS WISER THAN ALL MEN (1Kings 5:11):
than Adam. What, then, was Adam´s wisdom? You

> find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create Adam, He took counsel with the ministering angels and said to them `LET US MAKE MAN´ (Gen. 1:26).They spoke before Him, `LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM?´ (Ps. 8:5). He [God] replied to them, `The man whom I desire to create will have wisdom exceeding yours.´ What did He do? He gathered all the cattle, beasts, and birds, set them before them [the angels], and said, `Give names to these.´ They stood and did not know {what to call them}. He went to Adam and asked him, `What are the names of these?´ He [Adam] answered, `Lord of the universe, it would be proper to call this "ox", and this "lion", and this "horse", and this "camel", and this "eagle",´ and so with them all. Then God asked him, `What is thy name?´ He answered, `"Adam," because I was created from the ground {adamah}.´ `And what is My name?´ He answered, "Lord," because Thou art Lord over all Thy creatures.´ That is what is written, `I AM THE LORD, THAT IS MY NAME´ (Isa. 42:8) that is the name by which Adam called Me, that is My name which I agreed upon with Myself, that is My name which I agreed upon between Myself, My creatures, and the ministering angels. 6

This midrash can be divided into two main ideas. The first indicates humankind´s intellectual supremacy over the angels and the second part, a demonstration of this supremacy. An underlying theme of this midrash is also humankind´s dominion over animal life. This is expressed through Adam´s naming of the animals. The naming of the animals has additional significance, for on one level it made humankind a partner in God´s creation. This will be explored in greater detail below. A parallel version of this passage makes one important addition. After Adam named the animals the Pesikta Rabbati cites as a proof-text, Genesis 2:20 ("And the man gave names to the animals").

Beyond this verse, there are no marked differences between the two texts.

The same cannot be said, however, about some of the other parallel versions. Whereas Bereshit Rabbah (17:4) and Bemidbar Rabbah (19:3) parallel the basic bodies of the previous versions (even including Genesis 2:20) they exclude the last phrase; "and the ministering angels". In the Bemidbar Rabbah rendition, the text ends "with My creatures". This text then proceeds with an entirely different thought. Bereshit Rabbah, also omits "with the ministering angels" but continues with a discussion of why Eve was created at the same time as Adam.[7] There are no suitable explanations for why the reference to "ministering angels" was omitted.

Not all the angels were in favor of the creation of human beings. Whereas the previous midrashim stated that they held no real position on this issue, another group of passages clearly demonstrates the angels' displeasure. In the Avot deRabbi Natan we read:

> when the Holy One, blessed be he, created Adam, the ministering angels sought to burn him. But God put His palm over him and protected him. [8]

In two other texts one from tractate Sanhedrin (38b) and the other Bereshit Rabbah (8:5), the angels debated with God about the impact that humankind (and their {humankind's}) nature) would have on the earth. In the first passage, from the Talmud, the debate is quite one-sided. Every argument

is met with a rebuke by God.

> Rab Judah said in Rab's name: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create man, He {first} created a company of ministering angels and said to them: Is it your desire that we make a man in our image? They answered: Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?- Such and such will be his deeds, He replied. Thereupon they exclaimed: Sovereign of the Universe, `WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM, AND THE SON OF MAN THAT THOU THINKEST OF HIM?' (Ps. 8:5). Thereupon He stretched out His little finger among them and consumed them with fire. The same thing happened with a second company. The third company said to Him: Sovereign of the Universe, what did it avail the former {angels} that they spoke to Thee {as they did}? the whole world is Thine, and whatever that Thou wishest to do therein, do it. When He came to the men of the Age of the flood, and the division of the {tongues} [Tower of Babel] whose deeds were corrupt, they said to Him: Lord of the Universe, did not the first {company of angels} speak aright? `EVEN TO OLD AGE I AM THE SAME, AND EVEN TO HOAR HAIRS WILL I CARRY' (Isa. 46:6), He retorted. 9

This passage tells us four things about the creation of humankind; the angels were opposed, God only accepted an affirmation of the decision to create humans, humans were perceived as corrupt, and God was extremely biased towards the creation of human beings.

Unlike the midrashic passages examined on the previous pages, which characterized the angels as in favor of the creation of humans, this text shows their displeasure. In addition it tells why they were displeased. While the previous midrashim gave a potentially selfish reason (more intelligent than the angels) for the angel's opposition, this passage gives a selfless explanation. The angels were

not opposed to the creation of humans because they were brighter than the angels. but rather, due to the fact that the angels perceived humans as corrupt. Thus, they asked God, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him" (Ps. 8:5). That is to say, "Why are You (God) concerning yourself with this corrupt entity and placing it in your inherently "good" world?" The incongruity of these attitudes is noteworthy.

The other three components of the passage supply the answer to the angels´ question. While a superficial examination of the passage might indicate that God was unreasonable, and really wasn´t interested in the angel´s opinion this was not the case. The discussions with, and the rebuke of, the angels really served to show how committed God was to the creation of humankind. Even with, the statements of the angels, and the confirmation by later people, of human corruptedness, God still stood behind human kind.

One could also read this passage in a different manner. Rather than seeing God as looking only for angelic affirmation (and thus when God doesn´t receive it destroys the angels), one could reverse the onus. Perhaps, God destroyed those angels who opposed the decision because God saw what was truly behind their motives. They were not seeking to advise God, but were rather jealous of God´s decision.

Whatever, the explanation for the angels´ actions, the

principal theme of this passage is that God wanted to create, no matter what the cost, human beings. Although human nature might be corrupt, at this or a later moment, God had faith that this could change. Just as the passage concluded with the verse from the book of Isaiah 46:4 ("Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry") so, too, God would remain by the side of humans through trial and tribulation, through good and evil for all time.

Using the same vehicle as the previous passage, a debate between God and the ministering angels, the following passage again shows the weaknesses of human kind, and God's unwavering support for these same beings.

> R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, `Let him be created,' whilst others urged, `Let him not be created.' Thus is it written, `LOVE AND TRUTH FOUGHT TOGETHER, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE COMBATTED EACH OTHER' (Ps. 85:11): Love said, `Let him be created, because he will dispense acts of love'; Truth said, `Let him no be created, because he is compounded [filled with] of falsehood'; Righteousness said, `Let him be created, because he will perform righteous deeds'; Peace said, `Let him not be created, because he is filled with strife.' What did the Lord do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He, `Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou despise Thy seal {Truth is God's seal}? Let Truth arise from the earth!' Hence it is written, `LET TRUTH SPRING UP FROM THE EARTH' (Ps. 85:12).
>
> All our Rabbis say the following in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkah say it in the name of R. Simon: ME'OD

("very") is identical with Adam; as it is written, `AND GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS GOOD- ME´OD´ (Gen. 1:31), i.e., and behold Adam was good.

R. Huna the Elder of Sepphoris, said: While the ministering angels were arguing with each other and disputing with each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, created him. Said He to them [the angels]: `What can ye avail? Man has already been made?´ 10

The first part of this midrash records in great detail the debate between the angels (and God). Basing themselves on Psalm 85:11 the rabbis created a conflict between divine and human attributes. Literally, the biblical verse reads "Mercy (or love- hesed) and truth met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The rabbis, however, changed the words´ meanings. For the purpose of this midrash they read nifgashu ("met") as an act of fighting. Nishkaf ("kiss"), was understood as "neshek which means "weapon". Through this clever reinterpretation, the rabbis were able to create a conflict where one did not previously exist.

Having created the angelic conflict, the rabbis proceeded to describe the different views. Unlike, the previous passage, God does not destroy those angels who opposed the Divine´s desire. Nor, in this passage does God really play an active role. Rather, the angels´ debate amongest themselves (with God observing) The only action which God took, in the first part of the passage, was to send "Truth" down to earth and then to retract this act.

The second part of the text ("All our Rabbis...") could

stand on its own. Its basic message is that humankind is inherently good. Nonetheless, it also makes sense to include it with the entire midrash because it ties the first and third part of the passage together. In addition, it signifies that irrespective of the angels varying opinions God considered humans good. The rabbis deduced this from a play on words. Rather, than reading me´od ("very") (in Gen. 1:31), they changed the letters around (both me´od and adam have the same letters- alef, daled, mem) and read Adam. Consequently, the biblical verse (Gen. 1:31) read, "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, Adam was good."

By again revocalizing a word from the biblical account of the creation, the rabbis suggested that God created humankind, while the angels were arguing. Taking na´aseh ("we will make"), the rabbis revocalized it making it into a nifal form of the verb; thus ne´aseh ("is made"). Rather than saying, "Let us make" as it is usually read, the rabbis changed it to read, "Man has already been made in our image". The third part of the passage, succinctly denoted God´s desire to create humankind. While the angels were debating the issue, God went ahead and created the first human.

Several things tie these three sections together. While all three reinterpret Hebrew words (to make their points), more importantly they also prove God´s love for, and desire

to, create humankind. Even, with all the negative attributes, God still deemed it important and practical to create human life. This appeared to be one of the primary lessons of these midrashim. God recognized our imperfections, and yet still created us, because of a divine faith in our abilities. Because of this, we are duty bound to try and overcome these less than God-like characteristics.

Several midrashim record the ministering angels as subservient to the first human. This group of passages is very interesting and raises a whole host of problems. They record that the angels saw the first human as a deity. We must ask, Why? Similarly, these midrashim deal with humankind's place in the world. Since the first human was created in the image of God (and some would say the angels) where did this person belong; in heaven or on earth?

In the next section, the description of the first human will be examined in greater detail. Suffice it to say that many of these descriptions border on the mythological. In many of them, the first human is described to have stretched from one end of the earth to the other. With such descriptions, it was not surprising that some (individuals and/or) groups would begin to see this being as either one of the angels or a deity itself. Similarly, the idea of the first human paralleled some groups concepts' of the Deity. According to E. E. Urbach: "In the various Gnostic doctrines the gods, and in particular the supreme deity, bore the names `the First Man', `the Man of Light', and

also just `Man´. Apparently the Amoraim at the beginning of the third century knew of such doctrines."[11] As will be shown in the following section, these titles are all analogous with titles and descriptions of the first human.

> R. Hoshaya said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, the ministering angels mistook him {for a divine being} and wished to exclaim `Holy´ before him. What does this resemble? A king and a governor who sat in a chariot, and his subjects wished to say to the king, `Domine! (Sovereign)!´ but they did not know which it was. What did the king do? He pushed the governor out of the chariot, and they knew who was king. Similarly, when the Lord created Adam, the angels mistook him {for a divine being}. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He caused sleep to fall upon him, and so all knew that he was {but mortal} man; thus it is written, CEASE YE MAN, IN WHOSE NOSTRILS IS A BREATH, FOR HOW LITTLE IS HE TO BE ACCOUNTED´ (Isa. 2:22). [12]

Using a parable of a king and a governor, the rabbis taught, in this midrash, that the first human was not, in any way, shape, or form, a deity. This message was confirmed, by the action that God took. In putting Adam to sleep God did two things; He showed His supremacy over Adam (thus proving Adam wasn´t a deity) and he showed that Adam wasn´t a deity because he slept (something a deity didn´t or doesn´t do). A parallel version of this midrash uses the same parable of the king and governor, but excludes the angelic component. It also uses different scriptural verses.[13] The theme and body, of the midrash is, however, identical.

Where the first human belonged was questioned and

answered by the rabbis. While some saw the first human as being a part of both worlds others argued that the first human belonged in only this, the earthly realm.

> R. Pappias also expounded: "Behold, the man is become one of us" (Gen. 3:22), like one of the ministering angels. Said R. Akiba to him: `That is enough, Pappias." He [Pappias] then said to him [Akiba]: `And how do you interpret: "Behold the man is become one of us {mimmenu}?"' Said R. Akiba: `Mimmenu does not mean one of the ministering angels. It only means that God put before him two ways, the way of life and the way of death, and he chose for himself death.' 14

In this midrash R. Akiba argued, quite forcibly, that humans could only be seen in this world. To imply, that at anytime that humans belonged in heaven ran counter to his and what he believed to be Jewish beliefs.

A midrash from Bereshit Rabbah attempts a clever approach to answer this problem. Rather than seeing the first person in heaven or earth, this text sees the first human as a part of both. What is particularly interesting about this passage is that it uses the principal of symmetry.

> Now all that you see are the offspring of heaven and earth, as it is said, `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH' {and everything that followed was derived from these} (Gen. 1:1). On the second day, His creations were of the celestial world: `AND GOD SAID: LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT, etc.' (Gen. 1:6); on the third, they were terrestrial: `AND GOD SAID: LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS' (ib. 11); on the fourth, of the celestial: `LET THERE BE LIGHT' (ib. 14); the fifth, of the terrestrial: `LET THE WATERS SWARM, etc.' (ib. 20) On the sixth day, He came to create man. Said He, `If I create him belonging to the celestial world, this will outnumber the terrestrial by one creation, and there will be

> peace in the universe; while if he is of the terrestrial world it will be likewise. But lo! I will create him partaking of both the celestial and terrestrial worlds, for the sake of peace.' Hence it is written, `THEN THE LORD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND, AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE' (Gen. 2:7), which is of the upper world. And Resh Lakish cited: `DOMINION AND FEAR ARE WITH HIM; HE MAKETH PEACE IN HIGH PLACES' (Job 25:2). 15

This midrash does not say that humans are gods or angels. Rather, it just states that the first human was created as a part of both worlds. In this way, it seems to resolve many of the conflicts which arose from humankind's creation. This midrash explains the divine element which is within the human being, is also the positive component of our nature. At the same time, it negates any notions of the first human being a deity or angel.

## III. THE CREATION OF THE FIRST HUMAN

The rabbis believed that the first human was created in stages. Much like their explanations of how heaven and earth were created, the rabbis also attempted to detail the process that the first human underwent in being created. As we saw in the previous sections, the rabbis maintained that the entire world was created for the sake of humankind. Thus, it was not surprising that God created human beings in spite of the angels' protests. The creation of the first human, in stages, amplified this idea. The rabbis showed

the difference between the first human's creation and all the other creations by producing numerous midrashim which glorified and explained, in great detail, the creation of the first human. They formulated several midrashim which broke the day of first human's creation into hourly segments.

> R. Johanon b. Hanina said: The day consisted of twelve hours. In the first hour, his {Adam's} dust was gathered; in the second, it was kneaded into a shapeless mass; in the third, his limbs were shaped; in the fourth, a soul was infused into him; in the fifth, he arose and stood on his feet; in the sixth, he gave {the animals} their names. 16

Various versions of this particular midrash appear in several of the midrashic collections.[17] With slight variations they are all basically the same. In the two versions, from the Avot deRabbi Natan, God conferred with the ministering angels in the second hour, and the naming of the animals (in the sixth hour) was omitted. The only other exception concerns the remainder of the passage (the seventh through twelfth hours). During these hours the fall of humankind is described.

It must be understood, that although the Torah tells two different creation of humankind stories (Gen. 1:26-28 {reiterated in Genesis 5:2} and 2:7-8) the rabbis saw the two as one in the same act. One of the ways that they defused the issue was to to argue that if two creations were suggested in the Torah then it was internal to Genesis 1:27. That is to say, "And God created man in his image" would suggest one creation, and "Male and female created He

them", the second. The creation story, in Genesis 2:7-8 does not even imply (by the rabbis) to have been a second creation. By situating the controversy within one verse, the rabbis were able to have more control over it. The question does appear in rabbinic literature. In a discussion concerning the benedictions recited at a marriage this question arose.

> Levi came to the house of Rabbi to the wedding feast of R. Simeon his son {and} said five benedictions. R. Assi came to the house of R. Ashi to the wedding feast of Mar his son {and} said six benedictions. Does it mean to say that they differ in this: that one holds that there was one formation [Yizteyrah], and the other holds that there were two formations?- No. All agree {that} there was {only} one formation, {but they differ in this:} one holds {that} we go according to the intention, and the other holds {that} we go according to the fact, as that {statement} of Rab Judah {who} asked: Is it written, `AND GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE,´ and it is written, MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM´ (Gen. 5:2). How is this {to be understood}? {In this way:} In the beginning it was the intention {of God} to create two {human beings}, and in the end {only} one {human being} was created. 18

In this very convoluted and difficult passage, the rabbis attempted to prove that there was only one creation. As was stated above, they totally ignored the creation story as told in Genesis 2:7-8 and instead concentrated on the Genesis 1:26-28 version. The midrash, however, does not only concentrate on these verses, but also Genesis 5:1-2 which reads "In the day God created man, in the likeness of God, made He him; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day they were

created." Thus it appears that the rabbis, in this passage, argued about the creations as described in Genesis 1:26-28 and 5:1-2, and not Genesis 2:7-8.

If we look closer at these verses we find that Genesis 1:27 begins with one created being ("And God created man in His own image") and ends with two beings created ("male and female created He them"). On the other hand, Genesis 5:1 begins with two created beings ("male and female created He them") and ends with just one created being ("and called their name man {`adam´}. By understanding what Rab Judah was trying to say the midrash becomes a bit clearer. Suffice it to say, the passage resolves the question by insisting that the problem wasn´t one or two creation stories, but rather one or two created beings. And their answer to this, is that two beings were intended to have been created, but only one was actually created.

The first human was created from the dust of the earth. This information was ascertained directly from the Torah (Gen. 2:7). Instead of being content with this information, however, the rabbis sought to further define the dust from which the first being was created. Their answers cover the spectrum from specific to general. One midrash claims that the dust came from the exact spot where the Temple was later to be built.[19] Others claim that the dust came from every part of the earth. In the tractate Sanhedrin we are told that:

> The dust of the first man was gathered from all the parts of the earth...Adam's trunk came from Babylon, his head from Eretz Yisrael, his limbs from the other lands, and his private parts, according to R. Aha, from Akra di Agma. 20

The exact purpose of this passage is unclear. It has been suggested that it was a rabbinic attempt at teaching the equality of all people.[21]

The Pirke deRabbi Eleazar contains a similar midrash, but with a different message. In this passage, the question was raised (wherein the previous passage the statement was made) why was the first being's dust gathered from all over the world.

> Why {did He gather man's dust} from the four corners of the earth? Thus spake the Holy One, blessed be He: `If a man should come from the east to the west, or from the west to the east, and his time comes to depart from this world [to die], then the earth should not say, the dust of the body is mine, return to the place whence thou was created.' But {this circumstance} teaches thee that in every place where a man goes or comes, and his end approaches when he must depart from the world, thence is the dust of his body, and there it returns to the dust, as it is said, `FOR DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN' (Gen. 3:19). 22

This passage is best understood if viewed in conjunction with the idea of resurrection. According to R. Simeon b. Yohai, this very verse (Genesis 3:19) "hints at resurrection".[23] I would conclude that this passage also has an added dimension. This midrash makes reference (although concealed) to a great deal of inner pain. There was probably a fear that if someone died, far from their

birth place he or she would not be resurrected. This midrash alleviates this fear. Even though it deals specifically with the first human, it general context ("If a man") concerns all of humankind.

The first being was created as a soulless lump.[24] Several midrashim tell us that this entity was brought to life and given a soul by God's breath. This view is similar to the idea that God created the world with the letter hey (see previous chapter). One midrash makes this connection.

> R. Phinehas said in the name of R. Levi: `WHEN THEY WERE CREATED' (Gen. 2:7)- i.e., He created them with the letter hey. 25

Earlier, in the same midrash, the rabbis explained that the nose was a thing of beauty. This was due to its being the place from where the first person received life.

> R. Levi b. Hayetha said: When a human king builds a palace, if he place its water spout over its entrance, it would not be beuautiful or commendable; but the Holy One, blessed be He, created man and placed his spout over his entrance, viz. his nose, and it constitutes his beauty and excellence. 26

The Pirke deRabbi Eleazar advocates a similar position. Like the previous texts, this midrash credits God's breath as being the entity that brought the first person to life.

> And He formed the lumps of the dust of the first man into a mass in a clean place, {it was} on the navel of the earth {Ezek. 38:12 sees Palestine as the "naval of the earth"}. He shaped him and prepared him, but the breath and soul were not in him. What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He breathed with the breath of the soul of His mouth, and the soul was cast into him, as it is said, `AND

HE BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE´ (Gen. 2:7). 27

As well as making God´s breath the life giving forth, this passage also makes apparent reference to the Temple. In an earlier midrash we saw how some rabbis believed that the dust of the first person was gathered from the place where the Temple would stand. Although, the Pirke deRabbi Eleazar passage doesn´t refer directly to Jerusalem, it is most probably implied in "the naval of the earth".

A midrash from Bereshit Rabbah draws a greater meaning from this incident.

> AND HE BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS...Because in this world {he [Adam] was endowed with life} by breathing {therefore he is mortal}; but in the time to come he shall receive it as a gift, as it is written, `AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT INTO YOU, AND YE SHALL LIVE´ (Ezek. 38:14). 28

According to this passage, God´s breath served as a device to make the first human, mortal. Later, at his (her) death, the breath of this world (which is a tool of survival) will depart, and a new breath (one that is a gift and therefore not needed) will be given. As well as giving solace to the individual who might fear death, this midrash also counters those who viewed the first human as a deity (or semi-deity). This text is clear in its affirmation that the first human, was a mortal.

It was stated previously that many of the descriptions and titles of the first human were reminiscent of outside groups (including gnostic) descriptions of their deities. A

common thread which has connected every chapter of this study, is that the rabbis did not operate in a vacuum. Often they rejected outright the beliefs and ideas of other philosophies, religions and cultures. In some cases, the took some of these ideas and filtered them through their own experience. What developed from this interaction were Jewish interpretations of what were once alien ideas and concepts.[29]

In several rabbinic sources the first human is described as a "soulless lump" which stretched from one end of the world to another. Where this account originates from is difficult if not impossible to ascertain.[30] Suffice it to say, that the rabbis removed the dangerous mythological implications of these stories and superimposed their own theologic beliefs into them. A common technique was to find scriptural proof-texts which supported, or proved the same or similar ideas. In terms of the passages which proposed that the first human stretched across the world, the standard proof was Psalm 139:5 ("Thou hast hemmed [or formed] {Ztar'tani} me in behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me").

The rabbis generally accepted that ztar'tani meant formed, but some differed in their interpretations of ahor ("behind") and kedem ("before"). The three interpretations below were probably meant to explain the incongruity between how the first human was special and unique and yet created on the last day.

> R. Leazar interpreted it [Psalm 139:5): He [Adam] was the latest {ahor} in the work of the last day, and the earliest {kedem} in the work of the last day...for he said: `LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH A SOUL OF A LIVING CREATURE´ (Gen. 1:24) refers to the soul of Adam.
>
> R. Simeon b. Lakish maintained: He was the latest in in the work of the last day and the earliest in the work of the first day...for he said: `AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERED´ (Gen. 1:2) refers to the soul of Adam.
>
> R. Nahman said: Last in creation and first in punishment. 31

In the first interpretation R. Leazar, saw Adam´s creation as occurring entirely on the sixth day. But, he seemed to make a differentiation between the first human´s soul and body in order to resolve the conflict. It would appear that the only way to understand his response would be to see "latest" as referring to the first human´s body and "earliest" as referring to its soul.

Resh Lakish, used a similar approach, but tied the first human´s soul to the first day of creation. In this manner, the first human was created on both the first and the last day. For this reason therefore it deserved its unique status. The response of R. Nahman shifts the focus of the interpretation. Instead of seeing Psalm 139:5 as dealing with the actual creation of the first human, he saw it as teaching an ethical lesson.

Many of the other rabbis rejected R. Leazar´s and Resh Lakish´s interpretation. They preferred to see Psalm 139:16 as alluding to the size of the first human. As was stated

above, this might have been derived from external forces. If indeed, gnostic and other groups taught that the first being extended throughout the earth, it was probably naive to think that the Jewish community would be immune to these teachings. Thus, rather than rejecting it out of hand, the rabbis, demythologized these stories, and found Jewish significance in them.

> R. Berekiah and R. Helbo and R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first man, he created him from one end of the universe to the other {in size}. Whence {do we know that Adam was in size} from east to west? Since it is said, THOU HAST FORMED ME WEST TO EAST´ (Ps. 139:5). Whence {do we know that he was in size} from north to south? Since is is said, ...`GOD CREATED MAN UPON THE EARTH, EVEN FROM ONE END OF HEAVEN UNTO THE OTHER´ (Deut. 4:32). And whence {do we derive that he was in height} as the whole space of the universe?--Since it is said, `AND THOU HAST LAID THY ARCH {HAND} UPON ME´ (Ps. 139:5). 32
> 33

There are several parallel versions of this midrash. In specific verses in the Torah, ahor and kedem have the meaning of east and west. Accordingly, it was not difficult for the rabbis to substitute these alternative translations in order to reach their conclusions.

The Psalm´s verse was not the only proof-text utilized. Psalm 139:16 was also seen as a possible proof-text to each that the first human filled the world.

> R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Banayah and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Leazar said: He created him a lifeless mass extending from one end of the world to the other; thus it is written, `THINE EYES DID SEE MINE UNIFORMED SUBSTANCE.´ 34

By itself, this proof only proved that the being was a lifeless mass. The additional interpretation of its size was probably deduced from the preceding midrashim (above) which used Psalms 139:5 to show how the being filled the world.

A passage from tractate Sanhedrin used "Since the day that God created man upon the earth, even from one end of Heaven unto the other" (Deut. 4:32) to reach the same conclusion. It then used the Psalm 139:5 to teach an entirely different message.

> Rab Judah said in Rab's name: The first man reached from one end of the world to the other, as it is written, `SINCE THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN UPON EARTH, EVEN FROM THE ONE END OF HEAVEN TO THE OTHER.' But when he sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, laid His hand upon him and diminished him, as it is written, `THOU HAST HEMMED ME IN BEHIND AND BEFORE, AND LAID THY HANDS UPON ME...' 35

Whereas the previous midrashim interpreted ahor and kedem as "east" and "west" and ztar'tani as "formed", this passage took a more literal approach thereby creating a contrast between the two verses. While we can not be sure as to the exact implications and purposes of the earlier midrashim, the point of this passage is quite clear. The first human changed physically after the Fall. Thus, not only was Adam cast out of the Garden of Eden, but he was physically changed. The full ramifications of this will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Previously it was suggested that descriptions of the

first being might have been influenced by gnostic and other external traditions. It was further stated that some of these Gnostic and external names for this being where reminiscent of some of the descriptions employed by the rabbis. One of these names, "the Man of Light"[36] almost exactly parallels an idea expressed in several midrashim.

In these passages, the first human is described as having a heel which shined brighter than the sun. The primary purpose of these midrashim might have been to teach that the first being had great wisdom. Another idea might have been that the first being changed after the Fall. But, neither of these ideas negate the obvious similarities to the gnostic concepts.

> Another interpretation of WHO IS AS THE WISE MAN? (Ecc. 8:1) This alludes to Adam of whom it is written, `THOU SEAL MOST ACCURATE, FULL OF WISDOM...THOU WAST IN EDEN THE GARDEN OF GOD´ (Ezek. 28:12-13). AND WHO KNOWETH THE INTERPRETATION OF A THING? (Ecc. 8:1). Because he [Adam] gave distinguishing names to all things. A MAN´S WISDOM MAKETH HIS FACE SHINE (Ecc. 8:1): his beauty {which reflected the wisdom God gave him} made his face shine. R. Levi said: The ball of Adam´s heel outshone the sun. Do not be surprised at this, because usually when a man makes two complete salvers, one for himself and another for a member of his household, whose does he make more beautiful? Is is not his own? Similarly, Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the sun for the service of Adam; so was it not right that the ball of his heel should outshine the sun, and how much the more so the beauty of his face! [37]

If we accept the premise that the rabbis adapted foreign ideas and interpreted them in a Jewish manner, then this midrash takes on a new significance. Rather, than just

seeing it as teaching one of several lessons, it might also be a prime example or rabbinic syncretism. At the same time, it would prove the skill which the rabbis displayed in demythologizing and reinterpreting these doctrines and stories.

This particular midrash, and its numerous parallels, suggest that a great light shined from both the face and the heel of the first being.[38] From this passage we can derive various different meanings. The passage teaches that the first human had great wisdom and was envisioned to have been a possession of God. Furthermore, it sets up the creation hierarchy. As was stated, the sun was created "for the service of man". Such a belief is congruent with midrashim which saw the world as having been created for the sake of humankind.[39] The conclusion of one of the parallel versions introduces another meaning. According to a passage in the Pesikta Rabbati:

> Not even for one night did Adam abide in his pristine glory. And the proof? `BUT ADAM ABIDETH NOT THE NIGHT IN GLORY´ (Ps. 49:13). The Rabbis say, however, Adam did abide overnight in his pristine glory. But at the end of the Sabbath his glory was taken away from him, and God drove him out of the Garden of Eden, as it is said `SO HE DROVE OUT ADAM´ (Gen. 3:24). 40

From this midrash we may conclude that the rabbis saw a marked difference between the first human, and the human that existed after the Fall. Whereas the first being, shined with the light of God´s wisdom, presence, and had

great size, the being which lived after the Fall, was like contemporary human beings.

## IV. THE FIRST HUMAN'S PLACE IN CREATION

Serious questions arose concerning the fact that the first human was created last. Since the rabbis believed that the entire world was created for the benefit of humankind, they wondered why humans were created last. It only made sense that humans should have been created first. In their quest to answer this question, the rabbis came up with numerous explanations.

Some of the rabbis believed that the intention of creating the first human preceded the actual creation.[41] Similarly, a few of these rabbis alleged that God created before the first human, certain things, such as the sun and food[42], that the human would need.[43] A group of midrashim which were examined above offer other explanations why the first human was created last.

Tractate Sanhedrin contains a particularly interesting explanation for why the first human was created last. Unlike many of the rabbinic passages we have explored, this one states outright its primary purpose.

> Our Rabbis taught: Adam was created {last of all beings} on the eve of [the] Sabbath. And why?- Lest the Sadducces [lit. minim "heretics"] say: the Holy One, blessed be He, had a partner {viz., Adam} in His work of creation. 44

Previously, we have seen how some groups saw the first human as a deity, or at least a semi-deity. This passage seems to be yet another rabbinic attack at these groups' beliefs. Although the rabbis considered the first human, a distinct entity, they by no means attributed to it super-natural powers. Thus, in response to some of these heretical groups' beliefs the rabbis responded that the first being was created last. This fact deemed it impossible to consider this being as having had any part in the creation.

V. THE NATURE OF THE FIRST HUMAN

The first human before the Fall, and the human after the Fall, were both perceived of as one and the same person. Although the rabbis were not prepared to accept this pre-Fall human as a deity they were willing to attribute to it special characteristics. One of these was immortality. Unlike later human beings the first human was created to live forever. Some of the rabbis interpreted "And God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:27) as referring to immortality. Hence, the human's image did not represent the physical appearance of God, but rather God's immortal state.

> The Holy One, blessed be He said to them: `I thought you would not sin and would live and endure forever and endure forever like Me;

> even as I live and endure forever and for all eternity; `I SAID: YE ARE GODLIKE BEINGS, AND ALL OF YOU SONS OF THE MOST HIGH´ (Ps. 82:6), like the ministering angels, who are immortal. Yet, after all this greatness, you wanted to die! `INDEED, YE SHALL DIE LIKE MEN--{Adam}´ (ib.), i.e., like Adam whom I charged with one commandment which he was to perform and live and endure forever; as it says, `BEHOLD, THE MAN WAS {ha´ya} AS ONE OF US´ (Gen. 3:22). Similarly, `AND GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE´ (Gen. 1:27), that is to say, that he should live and endure like himself. 45

Two primary messages are derived from this passage. The first, and foremost, was that because of Adam´s sin immortality no longer exists in this world. The second message, and the one of greatest significance for this section, is that the first human was very different from those who proceeded it. As well as being gigantic, the first human was immortal. The first human also spoke with God on an entirely different level then those of later generations.

A midrash tells us that:

> Before Adam sinned he could listen to the divine utterance standing upright and without being afraid, but after he sinned, when he heard the divine voice he was frightened and hid himself....R. Levi said: Before Adam sinned, the sound of the divine utterance came to him with mildness, but after he sinned it came to him like a fierce wild thing. 46

God, according to the rabbis, perceived of the first human as inherently good. That was one of the reasons why the human was able to hear God´s voice the way it did. This is not to say, however, that God did not see the other side of

the being. For although the first human was created good,it also contained a darker side. In another version of the debate between the angels and God (over the possible creation of humankind), this point was emphasized.

> R. Hanina...said {that} when He came to create Adam he took counsel with the ministering angels, saying to them `LET US MAKE MAN´ (Gen 1:26). `What shall his character be?´ they asked. `Righteous men shall spring from him,´ He answered, as it is written, `FOR THE LORD KNOWETH {yodea} THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS´ (Ps. 1:6), which means that the Lord made known {hodia) the way of the righteous to the ministering angels; `BUT THE WAY OF THE WICKED SHALL PERISH´ (ib.): He destroyed {hid} it from them. He revealeth to them that the righteous would arise from him, but he did not reveal to them that the wicked would spring from him, for had He revealed to them that the wicked would spring from him; the quality of Justice [midat ha-din] would not have permitted him to be created. 47

In addition to showing God´s bias towards humankind´s creation, this passage reinforces the concept that humans were created with both the potential for good and evil. In the passage which directly preceded this midrash the same argument was made, but with a slight variance. In the passage below, God speaks alone (the angelic presence is removed) and states that both the good and the evil attributes are necessary.

> R. Berekiah said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, He saw righteous and wicked rising from him. Said he: `If I create him, wicked men will spring from him; if I do not create him, how are the righteous to spring from him? 48

Both passages are indicative of rabbinic perceptions of good and evil. While, it would have been preferred for

there to be no evil, its existence was a fact of life. In addition, these passages absolve Adam and Eve (as well as the serpent) from some of their guilt. Rather than their creating evil, and putting it on this earth, they can only be charged with allowing it to surface. Its presence was there since their creation. Both inclinations (good and evil) were created by God.[49]

## VI. THE FIRST HUMAN'S KNOWLEDGE

Although the first human was often seen as a soulless lump, the amount of knowledge that it accrued was most remarkable. Not only, did the first human know the future, but it also spoke Aramaic[50] and was able to name the animals. These abilities should not be surprising. As we have frequently seen, the rabbis recognized the first human as something quite different from later humankind. It was therefore important to invest the first human with a special intelligence. The knowledge of the future was a component of the first human's intelligence.

Various midrashim allege that God told the first human about Israel's future.

> R. Joshua b. Korha said: It states, `THINE EYES DID SEE MINE UNFORMED SUBSTANCE, AND IN THY BOOK THEY WERE ALL WRITTEN' (Ps. 139:16). This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam, the first man, every

> generation and its teachers, every generation and its administrators, every generation and its leaders, every generation and its prophets, every generation and its heroes, every generation and its transgressors, every generation and its pious men, and that in a certain generation such a king will arise and in a certain generation such a Sage will live. 51

Another midrash suggests a similar message but uses a different proof-text. However, this passage reaches a slightly different conclusion.

> R. Nehemiah said: Whence do we know that one man is equal in worth to the entire generation? For it is stated, `THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM. {IN THE DAY THAT GOD CREATED MAN, IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD MADE HE HIM}´ (Gen. 5:1). and elsewhere it states, `THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVEN AND OF THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED {IN THE DAY THAT THE LORD GOD MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN}´ (Gen. 2:4). As in the one verse {which describes the creation of the world} the terms "created" and "made" are used, so in the other verse {which describes the creation of man} the terms "created" and "made" are used. This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam all the future generations that were to issue from him standing and sporting [playing], as it were before him. Some say that He showed him only the righteous {of every generation}, as it is stated, `EVERY ONE THAT IS WRITTEN UNTO LIFE IN JERUSALEM´ (Isa. 4:3). 52

In this second midrash R. Nehemiah paralleled the two biblical verses to derive his conclusion. The exact purpose of the second verse, however, is unclear, since the point could have been deduced from just the first verse. This is how it appears in a another version found in tractate Sanhedrin.

> What is the meaning of the verse, `THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM?´ It is

> to intimate that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him {Adam} every generation and its thinkers, every generation and its sages. 53

This last version is particularly interesting because it combines the second midrash's proof-text with the first midrash's explanation.

We can derive some other interesting ideas from these three texts. The first and the last midrashim tell us something about the authors of the midrashim and their sitz im lebem. While the first version is more complete they both conclude with pious men, teachers or sages. Interestingly, these are the same titles that the rabbis employed to describe themselves. It is therefore not coincidental that they envisioned the first human as seeing their eventual existence. Of course, this supports and substantiates any claims of authenticity that they might have maintained (particularly against rival groups).

The conclusion of the second midrashim is also enlightening. It ends with the statement that God only revealed to the first human the righteous of future generations. The question could and should be asked, why? The answer might lie in the chronology of events. If God shared this information with the first human, than it could be suggested that only the righteous were shown because the first human was unaware of the "evil" which lurked within himself. To show him the wicked of the future would indicate that he would eventually sin (in Eden). However, the converse is also viable. If this event took place after

the Fall, then it would give Adam hope for the future, and relieve any guilt that he might have had. According to another midrash this event took place while the first being was still an unformed mass.

> R. Simeon ben Lakish said in the name of R. Eleazar ben Azariah: At the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, was creating Adam, He had come to a stage in creating him when Adam had the form of a golem, an unarticulated embryo, which lay prone from one end of the world to the other. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, caused to pass before the golem each generation with its righteous men, each generation with its wicked men, each generation with its scholars, each generation with its leaders; and He asked; `Golem, what have thine eyes seen?´. 54

This passage might have answered our question accept that it also records the passing of the wicked before the first human. And thus, we are left to conclude that all the interpretations are possible.

## VII. THE FIRST HUMAN´S DOMINION OVER THE ANIMAL WORLD

The ultimate example of the first human´s intelligence was demonstrated in the naming of the animals. This was of course, only one facet of the first human´s relationship with the animal kingdom. Another major component of their relationship called for the animals to be subservient to

the first human. The first, has theological implications, the second, cultural.

In the previous chapter a rabbinic argument was put forward that God created the parts of the world simply by saying that each part was so ("va´yomer").[55] In the ancient world, the power of a name was powerful. To give a name gave existence and in some cultures the cursing of a name destroyed the soul.[56] It is therefore understandable why some groups might have considered the first human to have been a semi-deity. Like all the other biblical verses which lent themselves to such an interpretation, so, too, did description of first human naming the animals (Gen. 2:20). The Pirke deRabbi Eleazar contains a passage which probably reflects this phenomena.

> Adam said to them: What {is this}, ye creatures! Why are ye come to prostate yourselves before me? Come, I and you, let us go and adorn in majesty and might, and acclaim as King over us the One who created us. 57

This passage seems to have been a polemic against those who believed that the first human was a deity. In the midrash the animals appeared to prostate themselves before Adam, as if he was a deity. In response, Adam pointed out that there is only one Creator, and that is God.

The rabbis, maintained, that although the first human named the animals, this was not an act of creation. Rather, it was just one component of the first human dominion over the animal kingdom.[58] That the first human´s dominion was

conditional also lessened the deistic nature of the act. For humankind to maintain the dominant relationship certain obligations had to be followed.

Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that: "Rami b. Hama said: A wild beast has no dominion over man unless he [man] appears to it as a brute [lit. "cattle"]."[59] This is to say, if a human, behaves like an animal, then they are on the same level and the human no longer has dominion over the animal. Similarly, a passage in Bereshit Rabbah insinuated that human dominion over animals was gained (or maintained) only through merit.

> AND HAVE DOMINION (REDU) OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA (Gen. 1:28). R. Hanina said: If he [the first human] merits it [dominion], {God says} `uredu´ (and have dominion); while if he does not merit, {God says} `yerdu´ (let them descend). R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: Of him who is our image and likeness {I say} `uredu´ (and have dominion); but of him who is not in our image and likeness {I say} `yerdu´ (let them descend). 60

The rabbis, deduced in this midrash, that if human beings acted like God they would continue to have dominion (from the hebrew root, resh, daled, hey) over the animals. If, however, they did not, then it would be as if they had descended, (Hebrew root, yod, resh, daled), and they would lose the privilege of dominion. As can be see, the rabbis compared the two similar hebrew roots to make this judgement.

The Fall was another reason Adam and Eve lost dominion over the animals.

> [In the hour] that the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, God gave him dominion over all things: the cow obeyed the ploughman, the furrow obeyed the ploughman. But when he sinned, He made them rebel against him: the cow did not obey the ploughman, nor did the furrow obey the ploughman. But when Noah arose, they submitted... 61

This passage ties quite nicely with the previous midrash. Both support the idea that the lose of the first human's dominion over the animals was due to the Fall. Nonetheless, this passage goes one step further, and reinstates the dominion through the acts of Noah. But, after the Noah, the relationship between human and animal was different. Where previously, the human named and controlled the animals, after Noah, the animals submitted to human control. The dynamics of the relationship had changed. Technically, humans no longer had the same kind of dominion over the animals. Nevertheless, some rabbis recognized the realities of everyday life, and saw humans controlling animals, but they deduced that it was a different form of dominion; a form that developed only after Noah.

## VIII. THE CREATION AND RELATIONSHIP OF EVE WITH ADAM

Throughout rabbinic literature there is little or no distinction made between the first human and the individual known as Adam. For the majority (if not all) the rabbis, these persons were one in the same.[62] The two creation

stories (Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25) were not seen as two separate beings. Albeit there was confusion. In the first story, God created what seemed to be one person, but of two sexes. In the second story, the woman was created from the man. For some it was difficult to reconcile these two narratives. The rabbis, however, saw no real distinction between the two stories. By seeing the first being as both a male and a female the problem dissipated. Similarly, to see the first person as having two sides, (and one side later becoming a woman) also resolved the problem. The rabbis attempted numerous explanations to make the stories appear plausible.

One explanation considered the first human to have been both sexes. According to "R. Samuel b. Nahman... When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first man, He created him an hermaphrodite [`androginoes´]."[63] Whether this became the general model is unclear. Rabbinic literature is replete with alternative approaches. Depending on which interpretation the reader prefers, the following midrash can either be understood as advocating a hermaphroditic being, or a complete male being, but with two sides.

> R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Lord created Adam He created him double faced, then He split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. To this it is objected: But it is written, `AND HE TOOK ONE OF HIS RIBS, etc.´ (Gen. 2:21)? {Mi-zalothaw means} one of his `sides´, replied he [R. Samuel b. Nahman], as you read, `AND FOR THE SECOND SIDE {zela} OF THE TABERNACLE, etc. (Ex. 26:20). 64

A parallel version of this midrash, from Vayikra Rabbah, however, removes any doubt about the true meaning of the passage. The later text states implicitly that "two backs resulted, one back for the male and another for the female."[65] Nevertheless, both these passages record an objection. Although the argument is refuted (by showing that the Hebrew root ztadi, lamed, and ayin can mean both "rib" and "side") this must indicate, that not everyone was satisfied with the ideas being espoused.

One midrash attempts a different approach.[66] The Torah states that the Adam was created "from the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). R. Judah b. R. Simon saw "dust" as superfluous. He thus interpreted that one should not read afar ("dust"), but, rather, ofer ("a young man"). Consequently, one should read that Adam was created as a young man. The remainder of this midrash is also of particular interest.

> R. Eleazar b. Simeon said: Eve too was created fully developed. R. Johanon said: Adam and Eve were created at the age of twenty. R. Huna said: Afar is masculine, while adamah ("ground") is feminine: a potter takes male dust {course earth} and female earth {soft clay} in order that his vessels may be sound.

R. Huna seems to support, if not advocate the idea that both Adam and Eve came from the same place. If this is the case, then it would stand to reason, that he, too, saw the first human as being either a hermaphrodite or at least a

two-sided being. His metaphor can best be understood in this context.

There were also rabbis who strongly advocated the position that Eve came directly from Adam's rib. Although the two-sided and hermaphrodite arguments did not preclude the possibility of the rib creation, it appears that some rabbis stressed this form of Eve's creation. One particular midrash discusses why Adam's rib was used instead of another part of his body.

> R. Joshua of Sirkin said in R. Levi's name: WAYYIBEN ["and He made"] (Gen. 2:22) is written signifying that He considered well {hithbonnen} from what part to create her. Said He: 'I will not create her from {Adam's} head, lest she be swell-headed {light-headed}; nor from the eye, lest she [ogle men]; nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper, nor from the mouth, lest she be a gossip; nor from the heart, lest she be prone to jealousy, nor from the hand, lest she be light-fingered {thievish}; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout; but from the most modest part of a man, for even when he stands naked, that part is covered.' 67

The midrash concludes with the observation that in spite of God's precaution, women still exhibit all these behaviors. One could argue that the main purpose of this midrash was to denigrate women. It might be. Nevertheless, we cannot reject the fact, that it does advocate the rib as Eve's primordial material.

R. Hisda took the same verb, "Vayyiben", "and He built", that the previous midrash interpreted as "considered" and saw it as referring to Eve's physique.

> This [Vayibben] teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, built Eve in the shape of a storehouse. As a storehouse is {made} wide below and narrow above so that it may contain the produce, so was {the womb of} a woman {made} wide below and narrow above so that it may contain the embryo. 68

Thus, in this passage, the rabbis interpreted the verb in a much more literal fashion. In addition, rather than making a social statement (as did the previous midrash), this midrash reaches a more scientific conclusion. As will be explored in greater detail below, the creation of Eve, lent itself to a great many social as well as polemical interpretations.

In a section of the Talmud dealing with heretics, the charge was leveled (by one in the guise of "The Emperor") that the Jewish God was a thief because Eve was created from a stolen rib.[69] Similar midrashim are found in other midrashic collections. The root of many of these passages came most probably from the idea that the God that existed in this world was either evil (the demiurge), or not omnipotent. Either of these attitudes was threatening to the Jewish establishment.

> The Emperor once said to Rabban Gamaliel: Your God is a thief, for it is written, `AND THE LORD GOD CAUSED A DEEP SLEEP TO FALL UPON THE MAN {Adam} AND HE SLEPT {AND HE TOOK ONE OF HIS RIBS}´ (Gen. 2:21). Thereupon his {the Emperor´s} daughter said to him [Rabban Gamaliel]: Leave him [my father] to me and I will answer him, and {turning to the Emperor} said: `Give me a commander.´ `Why do you need him?´ he asked.- `Thieves visited us last night and robbed us of a silver pitcher, leaving a golden one in its place.´ `Would that such visited us every day!´ he

> exclaimed. `Ah!´ she retorted, `was it not to Adam´s gain that he was deprived of a rib and a wife presented to him in its stead to serve him?´ He replied: `That is what I mean: he should have taken it from him openly.´ She said to him: `Let me have a piece of raw meat.´ It was given to her. She placed it under her armpit, then took it out an offered it to him to eat. `I find it loathsome,´ he exclaimed. `Even so would she {Eve} have been to Adam had she been taken from him openly,´ she retorted. 70

Utilizing a great polemical technique (of having someone from the opponents side argue your case) this passage provides a rational for why God took the rib from Adam. In so doing, the passage exonerates God (of guilt or lose of power) while showing that God did the only logical thing. Likewise, it was the romantic thing to do.

A passage from Bereshit Rabbah uses a slightly different argument to reach a similar conclusion.

> A {Roman} lady asked R. Jose: `Why {was woman created} by a theft?´ `Imagine," replied he, `a man depositing an ounce of silver with you in secret, and you return him a litra (=12 ounces) of silver openly; is that theft!´ `Yet why in secret?´ she pursued. `At first He created her for him and he saw her full of discharge and blood; thereupon he removed her from him and created her a second time.´ `I can corroborate your words,´ she observed. `It had been arranged that I should be married to my mother´s brother, because I was brought up with him in the same home I became plain in his eyes and he went and married another woman, who is not as beautiful as I.´ 71

The beginning of this midrash is reminiscent of the previous one. Both begin with a theft and then the returning of an item of greater value. They are also similar in that they both ultimately have someone from the opposing

viewpoint either state outright (in the first passage the daughter) or later confirm (the woman's example in the second passage) the rabbi's perception. Again, in this second passage God is presented as having given a gift rather than stealing.

R. Samuel b. Nahmani tried a different approach. He alleged that God removed an extra rib from Adam's body. Therefore He wasn't taking anything that was essential.

> ...R. Samuel maintained: He took one rib from between two ribs, for it is not written, {`And He closed up the place with flesh"} in its place, but `AND HE CLOSED WITH FLESH IN THEIR PLACES' (Gen. 2:21). 72

To reach his conclusion R. Nahmani read the suffix of tahtennah as plural. Thus it referred to the place where the ribs existed. Regardless of their specifics each of these midrashim attempted to resolve the problem of God being called a thief. In all probability this was due to external forces. The rabbinic dialogue on the creation of Eve was not, however, limited to answering external critics. Many of the rabbinic statements reflect internal moral, ethical, cultural and legal attitudes.

The world of the rabbis was a male dominated society. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of midrashim (which deal with Eve) reflect this aspect of the environment. They see Eve as the archetypal female; gossipy, flirtatious, frivolous, immodest and unintelligent. Of course there were exceptions.

> AND THE LORD GOD BUILT (WAYYIBEN) THE RIB, etc. (Gen. 2:22). R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: She [Eve] was endowed with more understanding (binah) than a man. 73

This passage comes to its understanding by showing how the Hebrew roots for "build" and "knowledge" are the same (bet, nun, and hey). The preponderance of midrashim, however, do not hold women (and particularly Eve) in such high regard.

Previously we saw examples of how the rabbis interpreted the taking of the rib in a positive sense. But, there are also midrashim which saw this as an indictment on the nature of woman. Some rabbis believed that Eve's coming from the rib was indicative of her (and all womens') true nature.

> R. Joshua was asked: `Why does a man come forth {at birth} with his face downwards, while a woman comes forth with her face turned upwards?' `The man looks towards his place of creation {viz. the earth}, while the woman looks towards her place of creation {viz. the rib},' he replied. `And why must a woman use perfume, while a man does not need perfume?' Man was created from the earth,' he answered, `and earth never putrefies, but Eve was created from a bone. For example: If you leave meat three days unsalted, it immediately goes putrid...' 74

This very graphic midrash states quite explicitly how some of the rabbis viewed Eve. They did not mince their words. Whereas the previous midrashim emphasized the beauty of using Adam's rib, this passage sees it in a negative light. In this case the rib is seen as a put down of woman. Unlike men, women, by their physical nature are like meat that goes bad, and if left unattended, putrefies.

Some rabbis were not even willing to go as far as attributing a female component to the first created human. Although the following passage could be understood as an attempt solving an incongruity (how the first human could be both human and female) it must also be recognized that such explanations merely might reflect the thoughts of the larger society.

> MALE AND FEMALE (NEKEVAH) CREATED HE THEM (Gen. 1:27). This is one of the things which they [the translaters of the Septuagint] altered for King Ptolomy: `Male with his apertures (nekuvav) created He them.´ 75

Rather than translating nekevah as female, the interpreters of this verse revocalized the word to read nekuvav, "apertures". Although this change resolved the problem of a hermaphrodite creation, and removed females from the creation process, it also had a greater significance. To the rabbinic mind, the idea that females were created in the image of God was problematic. Female aspects of the deity could have been used by Greeks and others who believed in female gods. Consequently, by changing nekevah to nekuvav the rabbis repudiated the possibility of any such interpretations.

In addition the creation of Eve was interpreted in order to teach or sanction communal norms; particularly in regards to women. The following passage answers the question; why man was created first? As well as answering the question, it reaffirms social and moral rules of conduct, albeit, oppressive to women.

> R. Nahman b. Issac replied: It is reasonable to assume that the male walked first; for it was taught: No man should walk on a road behind a woman, even if she is his own wife. 76

Eve's creation was further used by the rabbis to strongly advocate marriage. The midrashic collections are replete with descriptions of Eve as bride, Adam as a bridegroom, and God as the best man.

> AND BROUGHT HER TO ADAM (Gen. 2:22) teaches that the Holy One, blessed be he, acted as a groomsman for the first man. 77

> AND THE RIB, WHICH THE LORD GOD HAD TAKEN FROM THE MAN, MADE HE A WOMAN AND BROUGHT HER UNTO THE MAN (Gen. 2:22)- this teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, plaited Eve's hair and brought her to Adam, acting as a groomsman to them... 78

> On one occasion while R. Judah b. Ilai was sitting and lecturing his disciples, a bride passed before him. `What was that?' he asked, and they replied, `A bridal party'. He said to them, `My sons, arise and attend to the bride, as it is stated, AND THE LORD GOD BUILT UP THE RIB' (Gen. 2:22). And if He attended to a bride, how much more should we do so!' Where do we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, attended to a bride? For it is stated, `AND THE LORD GOD BUILT UP THE RIB' (ib.); and in coastal towns a bride is referred to as ben'itha. Hence we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He equipped Eve, adorned her as a bride and conducted her to Adam, as it is stated `AND HE BROUGHT HER UNTO ADAM' (ib.). 79

Marriage was very important to the survival of the Jewish people. Consequently the rabbis did everything in their power to advocate it. The Adam and Eve narrative lent itself to this position. As well as describing Adam, Eve and God in the wedding roles, the rabbis drew much stronger

inferences from the narrative. Marriage was so important that they believed that a male who did not marry diminished the Divine image in this world.

> IT IS NOT GOOD (Gen. 2:18). It was taught: He who has no wife dwells without good, without help, without joy, without blessing, and without atonement...Some say: He even impairs the Divine likeness: thus it is written, `FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE MAN´ (Gen. 9:6), which is followed by, `AND YOU, BE YE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY´ (ib. 7). 80

Similarly Koheleth Rabbah states:

> R. Hiyya b. Gamda said: He is also an incomplete man, as it is stated, `AND BLESSED THEM AND CALLED THEIR NAME ADAM (Gen. 5:2), i.e. when they were both as one {as the effect of marriage} they were called `Adam´, but when they are not as both one they are not called `Adam´. Some say that {when unmarried} a man diminishes the Divine Image, as it is stated, FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE MAN´ (Gen. 9:6). 81

Both these midrashim reflect the emotional investment that the rabbis placed on the importance of marriage. For the rabbis, marriage and the bearing of children, were essential facets of community existence and prosperity. The Adam and Eve narrative gave them some of the tools necessary to advocate and teach this and other important messages.

## I. THE FALL

The third chapter of the book of Genesis tells the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve. The events which took place and the roles of the characters were well defined. Nevertheless, the rabbis found much to comment on. Why the characters acted the way they did, and what the results of their actions were, are two of the primary questions which the rabbis speculated upon. Furthermore, they were confronted by the problem of God's omniscience. If God, knew all, then why did God put Adam and Eve through a test that they ultimately were going to fail?

To say that the Fall was pre-ordained would not be in keeping with the rabbinic mentality. Although they credited God with being all-knowing, they also recognized humans as having a certain amount of free choice. Consequently, many of the midrashim, phrase their arguments in such a way that Adam and Eve were depicted as having a choice. One particular midrash expressly uses the phrase "sh'im yikalkel", "if he sins" to demonstrate this point.[1] In another passage, the idea is proposed that, Adam's stay in the Garden of Eden pre-determined. This might have been in recognition of human nature. That is to say, God gave Adam and Eve the choice, but knew that their nature dictated they would take the wrong path.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON (Ecc. 3:1).

> There was a time for Adam to enter the Garden of Eden, as it is said, `AND HE PUT HIM INTO THE GARDEN OF EDEN´ (Gen. 2:15), and a time for him to leave it, as it is said, `THEREFORE THE LORD GOD SENT HIM FORTH FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN´ (Gen. 3:23). 2

A passage from Bereshit Rabbah takes a different approach. Not only does it recognize that Adam would probably sin (because of his nature), but even Abraham, who was "the greatest man", might also sin.

> {THEN THE LORD FORMED} THE MAN (Gen. 2:7). for the sake of Abraham. R. Levi said: It is written, `THE GREATEST MAN AMONG THE ANAKIM´ (Josh. 14:15): `man´ means Abraham, and why is he called the greatest man? Because he was worthy of being created before Adam, but the Holy One, blessed be He, reasoned: `He may sin and there will be none to set it right. Hence I will create Adam first, so if hew sins, Abraham may come and set things right.´ 3

The above interpretation was derived from the definite article which preceded "man" in Genesis 2:7. R. Levi deduced that it must refer to something or someone specific or else it would have been superfluous. More importantly, this passage acknowledges that it might be within human nature to sin. One can control it, but one can also fall prey to it. Thus, it was within both Adam´s and Abraham´s nature to possibly sin. However, God knew that Abraham was the better person and was thus willing to take the chance with Adam. If he failed, then at least Abraham could have resolved the problem, but the converse was not necessarily true.

In addition the rabbis might have been suggesting something else in this passage. While Adam was perceived as

the first human, Abraham was the first Jew. The rabbis, cognizant of this fact, could well have been using Adam and Abraham as paradigms for themselves and their non-Jewish neighbors. The message of this midrash would then be, that Jews were "the greatest people". When viewed in conjunction with the idea of chosen peoplehood, this might be a viable interpretation.

The rabbis were aware that Eve might also have been prone to this behavior. God, of course, also knew this. The following midrash reiterates this idea.

> Then he [the first human] paraded them [the animals] again before him in pairs, {male and female}. Said he, `Every one has a partner, yet I have none´: thus, `BUT FOR ADAM THERE WAS NOT FOUND A HELP MEET FOR HIM´ (Gen. 2:20). And why did He not create her for him at the beginning? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that he would bring charges against her, therefore He did not create her until he [the first human] demanded her. But as soon as he did so, forthwith `THE LORD GOD CAUSES A DEEP SLEEP TO FALL UPON THE MAN, AND HE SLEPT´ (Gen. 2:21) 4

This midrash clearly advocates a position against Eve (and women). As well as blaming Eve for the Fall, it suggests that she would not have been created had the first human not asked for her. More importantly, this passage, again shows God as knowing beforehand what would occur in the Garden of Eden.

The three midrashim examined are but a small selection of those dealing with the problem of free choice and God´s pre-ordained plan. As has been demonstrated the rabbis

struggled with this issue, in the context of the Garden of Eden narrative. This, of course, was not the only forum in which this discussion took place. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, we can conclude that God knew what might happen in the Garden, but left the actual choice up to Adam and Eve.

## II. THE ROLE OF THE SERPENT

Besides Adam and Eve, the primary character in the Garden of Eden story is the serpent. Although most would argue, that the serpent is not the story's protagonist, it does play a central role in the narrative. Be it in the Torah, or the various midrashic collections, the serpent is seen as the cause of Adam and Eve's fall. In their interpretations of this story, the rabbis sought to explain why the serpent did what it did, was chosen to do it, and what the ramifications were of its actions?

In the previous chapters we have seen several midrashim which showed the angels' feelings towards the humans' creation.[5] By and far, most of these passages conclude with the angels resolved to the fact that humans were going to be created. Yet, some midrashim tell us that not all the angels were content with the decision and worked towards humiliating and possibility destroying human life. The Pirke deRabbi Eleazar alleged that the serpent was an agent

of a group of angels led by Samma´el, the angel of heaven.

> When the ministering angels saw this [the first human naming the animals] they retreated, and the ministering angels said: If we do not take counsel against this man so that he sin before His creator, we cannot prevail against him. Samma´el was the greatest prince in heaven... What did he do? He took {his group of angels} and descended and saw all the creatures which the Holy One, blessed be He, had created in His world and he found among them none so skilled to do evil as the serpent, as it is said, `NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD´ (Gen. 3:1). 6

This passage attributes the actions of the serpent to the jealousy and envy that the angels held towards the first human (and Eve). In the following chapter, Samma´el and his cohorts were caught and "He cast down Samma´el and his troop from their holy place in heaven, and cut of the feet of the serpent..." [7] As well remaining consistent with rabbinic notions of the angels´ feelings towards the human´s creation, these passages might have had an ulterior motive. Some of the rabbis might have wanted to give a rationale to the serpent´s actions which absolved it of much guilt. As one of God´s creatures, it might have been incomprehensible for the rabbis to see it as a cause of evil. Thus, by making it Samma´el´s puppet the serpent was relieved of the major onus (although it still had to be punished).

More often than not, the serpent was perceived by the rabbis to have been acting on its own instincts and desires. The question which then arose was why did the serpent do this? Whereas it could be clearly understood why

the angels wanted the humans to rebel against God, the rabbis had to come up with answers for the serpent's motivation. Several interpretations were preserved. From the Avot deRabbi Natan comes the idea, that the serpent behaved as it did, solely because it wanted to cause the human's fall. No additional reason is given.

> At that moment the wicked serpent reasoned to himself saying, `Since I cannot bring about the fall of Adam, I will bring about the fall of Eve. 8

Though one of the impetuses of this passage is to explain why the serpent dealt with Eve instead of Adam, it also gives a reason for the serpent's actions. It is also interesting to note, that the serpent was referred to not just as the serpent, but as the "wicked serpent" ("nahash ha'rasha").

Some passages attribute the serpent's actions to its own jealousy of Adam. Bereshit Rabbah states that:

> AND THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED. NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE, ETC (Gen. 3:1). Now surely Scripture should have stated, `AND THE LORD GOD MADE FOR ADAM AND HIS WIFE GARMENTS OF SKIN' (Gen. 3:21) {immediately after the former verse}? Said R. Joshua b. Karhah: It teaches you through what sin that wicked creature inveigled them, viz. because he saw the engaged in their natural functions, he {the serpent} conceived passion for her. 9

This midrash grows out of the belief that God made the described garments before Adam and Eve sinned. This being the case, the questioner asks why is the text interpolated with the story of the serpent? Shouldn't it have come after this verse? The answer to the question is that God wanted

to end the story on a more positive note.

Whereas the previous midrash only stated that the serpent developed a passion for Eve, tractate Sotah suggested that this passion led him to try and kill Adam; "It [the serpent] said, I will kill Adam and marry Eve".[10] From these two midrashim we can conclude that at least to some of the rabbis, the cause of the serpent's actions was a direct result of its jealousy towards Adam.

Whatever the reasons for the serpent's actions, the rabbis were prone to look at it as an evil entity. Nonetheless some maintained that the snake would have been different had it not committed this transaction.

> NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD (Gen. 3:1)...R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: he was like a camel. He deprived the world of much good, for had this not happened, one could have sent his merchandise through him, and he would have gone and returned. 11

According to this passage, R. Simeon b. Eleazar believed that had the serpent not transgressed it would have been able to make a long journey, and because of its prowess, no one would have dared attack it. But, it did transgress, and the rabbis castigated it for its actions. In the same midrash R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar called it an "unbeliever" [apikoros].[12] The Avot deRabbi Natan explicitly calls it rasha, "evil".[13] By and far we can infer from these midrashim that the rabbis were not inclined to find many positive attributes or virtues in the serpent. This could

be a result of rabbinic attempts at alleviating some of Eve's responsibility.

Although the rabbis generally placed some of the blame on Eve, some sought to show that she ate of the tree because of the serpent's guile, or force. In this way they relieved some of the burden of her guilt. Different midrashim detail the various ways the serpent forced Eve to eat from the tree. One explanation is that the serpent convinced Eve to eat after it proved that Adam had lied to her.

> GOD HATH SAID: YE SHALL NOT EAT OF IT, NEITHER SHALL YE TOUCH IT (Gen. 3:3); when he {the serpent} saw her thus lying, he took and thrust her against it. `Have you then died?' he said to her; `just as you were not stricken through touching it, so will you not die when you eat of it. 14

Another version of this midrash, from the Avot deRabbi Natan [15], and partially paralleled in Bereshit Rabbah [16], explains this event in greater detail.

> The serpent went and took of the tree's fruit and ate. Some say that when the tree saw the serpent coming toward it, it said to him: Villain, don't touch me...The serpent came to Eve: Look I touched it and did not die. You too,if you touch it, will not die. (He pushed her and she touched the tree, and she did not die) {16} He said to her: Know then that this prohibition is nothing other than His grudging nature. The moment you eat of the forbidden fruit, then, just as He can create a world, so you will be able to create a world; just as He can kill and revive, you will also be able to kill and revive, as Scripture says: `FOR GOD KNOWS THAT WHEN YOU EAT OF IT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED, AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL' (Gen. 3:5) 17

This passage explains one of the ways that the serpent got Eve to eat the fruit. By proving to her (by pushing her into the tree) that Adam lied to her, and giving a reason for why Adam lied, the serpent convinced Eve to eat the fruit. Although both parties are guilty, this passage definitely shows how the serpent took advantage of Eve's sensibilities.

Another midrash from the Avot deRabbi Natan used the same theme, but in this case designated Adam, rather than God, as the one that lied to Eve.

> Furthermore, the serpent said to her, `If you think it is the eating {of the fruit of the tree} that the Holy One, blessed be He, has forbidden us, behold I will eat of it and will not die; so you, too, will not die if you eat of it'. Eve then began to think to herself, `All that my master has commanded me from the beginning is false'- for Eve used to address Adam from the beginning as "my master". She immediately took of the fruit and ate it, and also gave some to Adam, which he ate, as it is stated, `AND WHEN THE WOMAN SAW THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR FOOD, AND THAT IS WAS A DELIGHT TO THE EYES, etc' (Gen. 3:6). 18

Again, in this passage, Eve is portrayed as being convinced by the serpent that it was safe to eat the fruit. While this attitude lessens Eve's guilt, it also says something about how the rabbis in general viewed women. While they were willing to place the major onus on the serpent, they still resolved that because of her female weaknesses she was unable to resist the serpent's power of suggestion and reason.

III. EVE'S ROLE

It has already been stated that the rabbis seemed to have a tendency to place the majority of the blame on the serpent. Nevertheless, Eve was still held accountable and responsible for her actions. As was briefly stated above, Eve's actions were often portrayed in response to her being a woman (and the negative way that they generally viewed women).

> The serpent argued with itself, saying: If I go and speak to Adam, I know that he will not listen to me, for a man is always hard [to be persuaded, as it is said, `FOR A MAN IS CHURLISH AND EVIL IN HIS DOINGS' (1 Sam. 25:3); but behold I will speak to Eve, for I know that she will listen to me; for women listen to all creatures, as it is said, `SHE IS SIMPLE AND KNOWETH NOTHING' (Prov. 9:13). 19

Besides the serpent, the rabbis searched for additional reasons why Eve ate the fruit. In one remarkable midrash Eve's actions seem very reminiscent of the Greek story of Pandora's box.

> Rabbi says: To what was Eve to be compared at that hour [when she ate the fruit]? To a king who married a wife and gave her authority over the silver and gold and all his possessions and said: Everything I own is yours except for this jug which is full of scorpions. An old woman came calling on her like those (who drop in to) ask for a little vinegar. She said to her: How does the king treat you? Said she to her: The king treats me wonderfully for he has given me authority over the silver and gold and all his possessions. He said to me: Everything of mine is yours except for this jug which is full of scorpions. The old woman said to her: Why, all his precious jewels are inside it! He is simply seeking to marry another woman

> and give them to her. She reached out and opened the jar: the scorpions bit her and she died. 20

In the version of this story found in the Pirke deRabbi Eleazar the parallels are made between the above characters and characters in the Genesis narrative. It states that: "The king is the first man (Adam), the woman is Eve, and the one who asked for the vinegar is the serpent." [21] As a brief sidenote, the version of this story as told in Version A of the Avot deRabbi Natan more closely reflects the Pandora story. There is no serpent like character and the female protagonist open the box/jug out of curiosity and not mistrust. The evidence, however, is inconclusive as to which story preceded the other or if in fact they are truly related.

The rabbis further explicated on Eve's role by describing what happened to her after she ate the fruit. Although the Torah gives some details (Gen. 3:6) concerning what Eve felt after eating the fruit the rabbis supplemented this with their own analysis. Two good examples are found in the Avot deRabbi Natan.

> Some say that when Eve ate of the fruit of the tree, she saw herself as though she was not injured and she said: Everything which my Master, Adam, commanded me is a lie. This teaches that Eve used to call Adam, "My Master."
>
> Some say that as soon as Eve ate the fruit of the tree, she saw the angel of death coming toward her. She said: It seems to me as though I am being removed from the world and in the end another woman will be created for Adam instead of me. What shall I do? I

> will make him eat with me, as Scriptures says: `SHE TOOK OF ITS FRUIT AND ATE; AND SHE ALSO GAVE SOME TO HER HUSBAND, AND HE ATE´ (Gen. 3:6). 22

These two passages both reflect rabbinic attempts at finding what she felt after eating the fruit. They also tells us some other things. The first passage most probably reflects the attitude of the male dominated society towards women, while the second passage explain why she had Adam eat the fruit. Neither look at Eve in a positive light. The first depicts her calling Adam a liar. Though this doesn´t make her innocent it does make it appear as if she is trying to shift the focus of the transgression. The second passage is more direct. After recognizing her own end Eve became jealous of Adam´s future wife and sought to have him also die.

The second midrash is similar to one from Bereshit Rabbah. However, this passage uses a different approach. Rather than giving Adam the fruit, so that he won´t marry another woman, Eve gives it to him so that he will not be alone after she departs.

> AND UNTO ADAM HE SAID: BECAUSE THOU HAST HEARKENED UNTO THE VOICE OF THY WIFE (Gen. 3:17). R. Simlai said: She came upon him with her answers all ready, saying to him, `What do you think? That I will die and another Eve will be created for you? `THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN´ (Ecc. 1:9). Or do you think that I will die while you remain idle? `HE CREATED NOT WASTE, HE FORMED IT TO BE INHABITED´ (Isa. 45:18). The rabbis said: She began weeping aloud (be-kolah) over him; hence it is written, `AND UNTO ADAM HE SAID: BECAUSE THOU HAST HEARKENED UNTO THE VOICE (BE-KOL) OF THY WIFE´: it is not written, `To

> the "words" of thy wife,' but `TO THE VOICE OF THY WIFE'. 23

We have read in the Torah and various midrashim that it was Adam's desire for a companion that led God to create one. It is in conjunction with this, that the above passage makes the greatest sense. Knowing that Adam requested her creation, Eve played on his need for companionship. The passage further showed her complete distress over the affair in its explanation of why the word "voice" was used rather than "words".

In describing Eve's role in the Fall of humankind, the rabbis were confronted with a dichotomy. One one level, she was created in God's image and on the other, she gave Adam the fruit which caused the Fall. Hence the rabbis had to find a way to continue seeing her as good (rather than wicked like the serpent) while still holding her responsible. By and far they did so, by lessening her guilt and attributing it mainly to her being a women. Consequently, we could conclude that Eve was guilty by virtue of her (female) nature and not specifically because of her actions. As the rabbis described it, Eve really had no chance to oppose the serpent because her femininity precluded her from acting in this manner. It is important to note that this probably better reflects the rabbis attitudes towards women than any great compassion for Eve.

Of course, she was not absolved of all her guilt. She still gave Adam the fruit. This could not be ignored.

According to one midrash, just as Eve had a serpent, so, too, Adam had a (metaphoric) serpent.

> R. Aha observed: The serpent was thy [Eve's] serpent, and thou was Adam's serpent. 24

Although many rabbis were disposed to lessening Eve's blame, others were still, as this passage indicates, set on finding her guilty. A passage in the Avot deRabbi Natan shows that some did not equivocate in how they viewed her actions.

> Adam was the blood of the world. Because woman brought death upon him she was put under the obligation {to observe the law} of the blood of menstrual purity. 25

In this passage Eve is charged point blank with causing the death of Adam, and subsequently all generations. For this, she was punished.

## IV. ADAM'S GUILT

Having found fault in both the serpent and Eve, some rabbis searched to also find it in Adam. Whereas, in the previous section some of the rabbis observed that Eve acted as she did because she was a woman, the rabbis had to find an excuse or cause for Adam's actions. Though finding fault in Adam didn't precluded the guilt of the serpent and Eve, it did serve to explain how he, as a male (and allegedly immune to the wiles that Eve succumbed to) also ate of the fruit.

One explanation might have been that he ate because he was moved by her tears, as stated in Bereshit Rabbah 20:8 (see above). Another midrash alleged that Adam was the cause of what happened.

> And why did all this have to happen? Because Adam was unable to persist in obedience of a light [easy] commandment which God had given him to observe. 26

In spite of this declaration the passage does not state which commandment it was that he couldn't observe. From this passage one may deduce that Fall was was the end result of Adam's not being able to follow the commandments. Consequently, it could be argued that Adam and Eve were not banished solely because of the fruit, but also because of their inability to observe God's statutes.

Tractate Sanhedrin introduces another possibility.

> Rab Judah also said in Rab's name: Adam was a Min [heretic/gnostic], for it is written, `AND THE LORD GOD CALLED UNTO ADAM AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHERE ART THOU?' (Gen. 3:9) i.e., whither has thine heart turned? Rabbi Issac said: He practiced episplasm {removed mark of circumcision}...R. Nahman said: he denied God. 27

All these statements reflect Adam as a non-believer. It is thus reasonable to argue, that at least for these rabbis Adam's guilt was a result of his lack of belief. Another midrash went even farther and charged that Adam had the chance to repent for his actions, but refused.

> `AND HE THAT PRESENTED, etc.' (Num. 6:14). R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: These words to be considered in the light of what Solomon was

> inspired by the Holy Spirit to say: `A MAN´S PRIDE SHALL BRING HIM LOW, BUT HE THAT IS OF A HUMBLE SPIRIT SHALL ATTAIN HONOR´ (Prov. 29:23). The first part of the verse, `A MAN´S PRIDE SHALL BRING HIM LOW´, applies to Adam; while the end of the verse, `BUT HE THAT IS OF A HUMBLE SPIRIT SHALL ATTAIN HONOR´ applies to our father Abraham. How so? The first part, `A MAN´S PRIDE SHALL BRING HIM LOW´, applies to Adam who transgressed the command of the Holy One, blessed be He, and ate of the tree. Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, desirous that Adam repent, opened wide for him the gate of repentance which Adam chose not to enter, {as evident from the verse} `AND THE LORD GOD SAID: "BEHOLD, ADAM IS BECOME AS ONE WHO BY HIMSELF [lit. "has become like one of us"] WOULD CHOOSE GOOD OR EVIL, EVEN NOW"´ (Gen. 3:22). {But when Adam said}: `NO´ [PN], {God then asked}: `SHALL HE BE ALLOWED TO PUT FORTH HIS HAND, AND TAKE ALSO OF THE TREE OF LIFE? (ib.). The verse is thus construed in accordance with the interpretation of R. Abba bar Kahanna: `How else is the phrase "even know" [v´ata] to be understood except that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Adam: "repent even now, and I will receive thee!" To which Adam replied: "No, I will not"´ hence the sense of the verse is that the Holy One, blessed be He, says "{Repent} even now," and Adam replies "No, I will not." 28

By reinterepreting the Hebrew words v´ata and pn, the rabbis created a conflict between God and Adam. Whereas generally v´ata means "and now" and pn means "lest" or "perhaps", in this passage the meanings were changed; v´ata signified "Repent, even after you ate the fruit" and pn implied Adam´s response of "No". Using these new definitions R. Abba bar Kahanna attempted to show that Adam´s arrogance was so great that even when offered the opportunity to repent he refused.

Of course not everyone agreed with these conclusions.

The preponderance of rabbis were reluctant to place little if any blame on Adam. For these rabbis, Adam was innocent. The guilt was placed on the serpent and Eve.

> Adam said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all the worlds! When I was alone, I did not sin against Thee. But the woman whom Thou hast brought to me enticed me away from Thy ways...The Holy One, blessed be He, called unto Eve, and said to her: Was it not enough for thee that thou didst sin in thy own person? But (also) that thou shouldest make Adam sin? She spake before Him: Sovereign of the world! The serpent enticed my mind to sin before Thee...He brought the three of them and passed judgement upon them consisting of nine curses and death. 29

As is seen in this passage, although Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent, all three were held accountable for their actions. While the levels of their transgressions varied, the rabbis ultimately judged that each individual had to be punished for what they did.

## V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

The Fall of Adam and Eve changed the status quo of the world. Rather than living an idyllic existence in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were forced to depart. Their way of life also changed. Where previously, all their needs had been met, they found that they would have to toil to create the food that would nourish them. But these were not the only things they lost. In some cases their physical stature and natural abilities were modified. Other midrashim

declare that whereas before the Fall they lived a life of prosperity and excellent health, afterwards they lived with pain, conflict, and death. But, Adam and Eve were not the only ones to suffer. The serpent, and even the earth were also punished.

Several midrashim tell us that before the Fall, the serpent had the ability to speak like humans[30], was of tremendous size[31], stood erect[32] and had feet and hands.[33] After the Fall, however, and as a consequence of its actions, the serpent lost all these attributes. The Avot deRabbi Natan is explicit in its list of "the ten decrees that were passed in regard to the serpent."

> The first is that his mouth was stopped up. The second is that his hands and feet were cut off. The third is that he eats dust. The fourth is that he sheds his skin and is pain like a woman giving birth. The fifth is that "I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN...(Gen. 3:15). The sixth is that though he eats delicacies and drinks all sweet things they turn to dust in his mouth, as Scripture says: `AND DUST SHALL BE THE SERPENT´S FOOD´ (Isa. 65:25). The seventh is that he begets only once every seven years. The eighth is that when a man sees a domestic animal, he does not pay attention to it, but when he sees a serpent, he becomes angry and tries to kill it. The ninth is that all other creatures are subject to blessing, but he remains under his curse [see Gen. 3:14]. As for the tenth, Rabbi Meir used to say in regard to him, according to the prophetic tradition, `I WILL REMOVE EVIL BEASTS FROM THE LAND´ (Ez. 34:25). 34

Many of these decrees reflect natural phenomena (1,2,3,4 and 8). Although they are filtered through the eyes of the rabbis, they describe in realistic terms the natural

characteristic of snakes. The remaining four (with the exception of #7 which could be "scientific") all echo biblical themes. This was probably the reason they were included. Another reason for their inclusion was more practical. This particular midrash comes from a set, where Adam, Eve, the serpent and the earth were all subjected to ten decrees.

> These are the words of R. Hanniah b. Gamaliel. Now if, when a person commits a transgression, his soul is taken from him on account of it, does it not follow with even greater forth that, if one performs a mitzvah, his soul will be granted to him? And why did the Torah make him liable to receive the forty stripes? Because he transgressed a law of Torah which was given after forty days and so brought the penalty of death on himself, who was created in forty days {the rabbis believed the fetus developed in forty days}; let him therefore be flogged with forty stripes and have his punishment {of excision} remitted; just as happened to Adam, who sinned and incurred the penalty of death and forty penalties- for the world was cursed on account of his sins with forty curses; ten for Adam, ten for Eve, ten for the serpent and ten upon the earth. 35

According to this passage the earth was also punished for its role in the Fall of humankind. The conclusion that the earth was also guilty came from the statement in Genesis 3:17, "cursed is the ground." No explanation, however, was given as to why it was cursed. Several of the rabbis attempted to find the cause.

> AND GOD SAID: LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS etc. (Gen. 1:11). It was taught in R. Nathan's name: three entered for judgement, yet four came out guilty. Adam and Eve and the serpent entered for judgement, whereas

> the earth was punished with them, as it is written, `CURSED IS THE GROUND´ (Gen. 3:17), which means that it would produce accursed things for him {Adam}, such as gnats, insects, and fleas...Now why was the earth punished? R. Judah b. Shalom said: Because she [the earth] disobeyed {God´s} command. For the Holy One, blessed be He, said thus: `LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS, HERB YIELDING SEED, AND FRUIT BEARING FRUIT´ (Gen. 1:12): just as the fruit is eaten, so should the tree be edible. She, however, did not do thus, but `AND THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH GRASS, HERB YIELDING SEED AFTER ITS KIND, AND TREE BEARING FRUIT; the fruit could be eaten but not the tree. R. Phinehas said: She exceeded His command, thinking to do the will of her creator; thus `AND TREE BEARING FRUIT´ implies that even non-fruit bearing trees yielded fruit. Now no difficulty arises on R. Judah´s view. But on R. Phinehas´s view, why was she cursed? It is in fact as one might say: `Cursed be the breast that suckeled such a one as this´. 36

From within the rubrics of the rabbinic world a tradition arose that the earth was punished along with the usual protagonists. Why this tradition started, or what led to its genesis cannot be ascertained. The above passage, cognizant of the tradition´s existence attempted to at least clarify why the earth was also punished. Two answers were given. The first records that the earth was punished because the trees that sprung up from it were supposed to be edible. Because they were not, God punished the earth. The second answer, given by R. Phinehas met with resistance, or at least a lack of understanding by later rabbis. He reasoned that the earth was punished because it gave forth non fruit-bearing trees that bore fruit. The rabbis had difficulties with this interpretation (no reason

is given and sought to clarify it. They deduced that that the earth was punished because it allowed such trees to grow.

As one of the major protagonists Eve was also punished. As well as bringing removing the idyllic experience from the world, she (and her later female descendants) received either seven or ten curses. The majority (seven) of these are based on Genesis 3:16. The passage in tractate Erubin explicates these.

> Eve was cursed with ten curses, since it is written: `UNTO THE WOMAN HE SAID, AND I WILL GREATLY MULTIPLY´, which refers to the two drops of blood, one being that of menstruation and the other that of virginity, `THY PAIN´ refers to the pain of bringing up children, `AND THY TRAVAIL´ refers to the pain of conception, `IN PAIN THOU SHALT BRING FORTH CHILDREN´ is to be understood in its literal meaning, `AND THY DESIRE SHALL BE TO THY HUSBAND´ teaches that a woman yearns for her husband when he is about to set out on a journey, `AND HE SHALL RULE OVER THEE´ teaches that while the wife solicits with her heart the husband does so with his mouth, this being a fine character trait among women...In a Baraitha it was taught: She grows long hair like Lilith, sits when making water like a beast, and serves as a bolster for her husband. And {why aren´t these among} the other[s]? These, he holds, are rather complimentary to her. 37

By separating Genesis 3:16 into segments the rabbis came up with seven curses that Eve suffered on account of her actions. But as the baraitha, correctly points out, there were only seven curses. Thus is attempted to find three more. Whether the list started with ten or seven is difficult to answer.

Bemidbar Rabbah stated "she [Eve] was cursed, on account of the serpent, with seven curses, recorded in Scripture; as it says, `Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply, etc. (Gen. 3:16).[38] The Avot deRabbi Natan, on the other hand, records ten curses.

> The first is menstruation, when she is driven from her house and banned from her husband. The second is that she gives birth after nine months. The third is that she nurses for two years. The fourth is that her husband rules over her. The fifth is that he is jealous of her if she speaks with any other man. The sixth is that she ages quickly. The seventh is that she ceases to give birth while men never cease being able to beget children. The eighth is that she stays in the house and does not show herself in public like a man. The ninth is that when she goes out to the marketplace her head has to covered like a mourner...The tenth is that if she was upright, her husband buries her. 39

Besides reflecting the male dominated culture of the period this passage closely parallels the previous two passages. Its difference lies in its firm commitment to ten curses. Whereas Bemidbar Rabbah stated that there were seven curses, and tractate Erubin, seven plus the three additional ones from the baraitha, this passages is unequivocal in its ten. This pattern might reflect the development of the idea. Originally the rabbis might have only used Genesis 3:16, and came up with seven curses. Later (as recorded in Erubin) the list went through a transition which finally solidified into the idea of ten as recorded in the Avot deRabbi Natan.

Like Eve and serpent, Adam, too, was punished with ten

curses. But only in the Avot deRabbi Natan. In other rabbinic sources Adam received a whole host of punishments for his actions. An interesting dichotomy exists, however. In those midrashim in which blame is placed, Eve and the serpent usually get the most. But when it came to punishments it would appear that Adam suffered the most.

After he ate the fruit of the tree, many of the super-human characteristics which he had been described as having, were lost. Whereas prior to the fall Adam stretched from one end of the earth to another, afterwards God diminished his size.[40] According to a passage in Bereshit Rabbah this was why he was able to hide himself.

> His height?- For its says `THE MAN AND HIS WIFE HID THEMSELVES´ (Gen. 3:8) R. Aibu said: His height was cut down and he was reduced to one hundred cubits. [41]

In addition, the glow from his face departed.[42] One midrash suggested that "he was reduced to complete nothingness".[43]

One of the most complete list come from the Avot deRabbi Natan.

> Ten decrees were passed with regard to Adam. The first was that he was clothed in precious garments, but the Holy One, blessed be He stripped the of him. The second is that he must toil to live. The third is that he eats good things but expels foul things. The fourth is that his children wander from city to city. The fifth is that he has a sweaty smell. The sixth is that he has the evil impulse. The seventh is that the worm and the maggot will have power over him. The eighth is that he is given over to a wild beast to be killed by it. The ninth is the brevity of life and abundance of trouble... the tenth is that man is destined to stand for judgement. [44]

Like the other lists which came from this midrashic collection (serpent and Eve) this one clearly reflects the sociological reality of its composers. Thus, many of the things in their life, which were considered less than idyllic, were attributed to the sin of Adam.

The rabbis also saw Adam's sin as the reason why God and the Shechinah departed from his presence. Before the Fall God spoke to Adam in a soft tone but afterwards "when he heard the divine voice he was frightened and hid himself."[44] Similarly, "after Adam sinned, the Presence removed itself to the first firmament."[45]

Of all the penalties and curses inflicted upon Adam and Eve the most severe was that of death. However, it was not an immediate death. Rather, they were first banished from the Garden of Eden, and then died natural deaths. Thus, the penalty wasn't so much death, but the loss of their (and their future generations) immortality.

> Why was he driven out? Because he brought death upon future generations, and deserved to die immediately, but Thou didst have compassion upon him and didst drive him out, as is the fate of one who commits murder in error, such a man having to be an exile from his home to the cities of refuge. 46

The rabbis believed that Adam's sin was the cause (or at least an explanation) for why death existed. In several midrashic collections the statement is oft made: "God set before him [Adam] two ways, the way of life and the way of death, and he chose the way of death and rejected the way of life."[47]. The rabbis attempted to show that the death

that Adam was penalized with was not just his own. Rather, his sin, affected all people and for all generations. The twice repeated reference to death, "Moth Tamoth" ("surely die") led them to conclude that this must be referring to the "death of Adam, death of Eve, and death for his descendants."[48]

The rabbis were not trying to answer why we die, so much as, why we are not immortal. Since we were created in God's image, and God is immortal, should not we too be immortal? This logical question led to the creation of a mass number of midrashim which expounded on this point. By and far, the rabbis reached the conclusion, that death entered the world because Adam chose the wrong path. This is not to say that because of Adam we are born sinful. Rather, it only suggests, that we are born in this world, with the reality of death.

# CONCLUSION

The rabbinic interpretations derived from the biblical narratives on the creation of the world, and Adam and Eve were not mere stories intended for the enjoyment of their listeners. Neither were they intellectual exercises, used and created by the rabbis to hone their interpretive skills. Rather, they were important statements, meant to make the Bible relevant to its contemporary listeners, while in many cases also serving as polemics against theologic opponents.

The rabbis of the past lived in a complex and changing world. Both the world around them and their internal Jewish world were in flux. All this influenced the way in which the rabbis looked at the world around them.

As has been shown throughout this thesis, the rabbis attempted to use midrashim to control the spread of threatening new ideas and theologies which were not compatible with their own. Realizing that their religious compatriots could not easily ignore these new ideas and philosophies the rabbis sought to control their influence on Judaism.

At first the rabbis might have tried to ignore these theologic challenges. Rather than confronting these cosmologic and esoteric questions the rabbis expressed a

reluctance towards studying them. This was done through strict enactments which limited the number of students who could study these ideas. In addition, public discourses on Maaseh Bereshit were forbidden. It appears from other midrashim, however, that later rabbis, nevertheless delved into these areas of study.

The premise of many of the rabbinic passages on Maaseh Bereshit appears to have been polemical. This might explain why they reinterpreted earlier rabbinic injunctions. Faced with gnostic and other heretical groups' theological challenges the rabbis had to defend the Jewish point of view. Some of these necessitated the need to explain events which took place before "In the beginning". While prooftexting was a major tool, it was not the sole device used by the rabbis.

Through this method, as well as intricate word plays, exegesis on specific letters, and pure logic the rabbis created numerous midrashim which advocated the inherent goodness of creation, the oneness of God and the eternal and omnipotent nature of the creator God.

These internal and external groups (like the gnostics) interpreted the Bible in a manner not harmonious with Jewish theology. Dualistic notions of several creators, the idea that this world was incomplete and evil, and that God was a demiurge and thus also evil threatened the theologic well-being of Judaism. In many of the midrashim on the

creation narrative, the rabbis sought to prove the foolishness of these beliefs.

For the rabbis, there was only one God. Consequently, they had to explain how the plural nature of God's name and the plural phrases used in the creating of humankind did not refer to several deities. The rabbis saw the plural nature of God's name as referring to God's self. Angels, the works of creation, the souls of the righteous, and other things were used to explain the plural phrases employed in the narratives on the creation of man and woman. It was impossible for the rabbis to lend any credence to the idea that these beings had any kind of "physical" role in the creation of life. Thus, the rabbis maintained that they served as advisors and counselors. Not as creators!

Several midrashim reflect polemics against the concept that this world was inherently evil and corrupt. Many of these ideas derived from gnostic beliefs in the incompleteness of creation and the corrupt nature of the creator. Thus, the gnostics maintained that the god of this world was a demiurge and evil, while the true God remained hidden. Of course, the rabbis rejected these ideas. For them, there was but one God, who was neither hidden nor evil. This God was good, and the world that He created, also good. Although elements of it (tohu and bohu) might have been considered by some to have been impure entities,

the world itself, as they knew it, was like a beautiful palace.

The nature of the world and the power of God were also challenged by dissident groups. They argued that God used pre-existent matter to create the world. Like the previous issues, the rabbis bitterly opposed this idea. But, not outright. Instead of rejecting the idea that the world came from matter which existed before its creation, the rabbis reinterepreted the idea. They alleged that it was well within the rubrics of Jewish belief to believe that God used different materials to create the world. But, and this is where they differed from their adversaries, God also created this premundane matter.

The biblical narrative on the creation of man and woman and their rebellion was extensively interpreted by the rabbis. Like the creation of the world narrative, the rabbis were forced to explain plural references to God in many of the midrashim. Unlike the explanations for the pluralities in the creation of the world narrative, these midrashim saw them as referring to angels or other creatures which existed before the creation of humans.

Other questions also arose from the biblical account of the creation of man and woman. One of the major issues concerned humankinds' place in creation. In the biblical account, humans were created last. However, the rabbis saw the creation of humans as the primary purpose for the world's creation. In addition, humans were given dominion

over the animal kingdom. Consequently, a question arose. How could humans be so important, and yet, created last? The midrashim on these biblical verses attempted to resolve this problem by offering several interpretations.

The midrashim on the creation of man and woman also suggest that the rabbis did not close themselves off from the outside world. Many of the descriptions of the first human resemble accounts from other cultures. Similarly, the description of the angels' role in the Fall and the specific primordial materials all reflect external influences. It is therefore possible to believe that the rabbis' views were in a limited sense, syncretistic. Several of the midrashic passages demonstrate that they took external ideas, foreign to Judaism, and reworked them into a Jewish context.

The midrashic account of Adam and Eve and their eventual rebellion were also used by the rabbis to teach moral and ethical lessons. In addition, these midrashim emphasized the importance of marriage and procreation. Finally, it must be understood that both groups of midrashim (on Adam and Eve's creation and their rebellion) reflected the society at large. This is predominantly evident through the rabbinic descriptions of Eve's creation and her role in the rebellion.

The rabbis of the past recognized that for the Torah to survive it had to be able to react to the present. This meant adaptation and interpretation. In their role as the

Jewish authorities of the time, it was the rabbis' responsibility to make the Torah relevant. This was done partly through their midrashim. They lived during a difficult time. With new challenges and increased contact with other cultures the rabbis were forced to remain open and yet protective of the Torah. The midrashim on the creation and those on Adam and Eve reflect both these dynamics; polemics and syncretism.

Like the rabbis of yesterday, we do not live in a vacuum. We live in an age of great mobility, close contact with others (of different backgrounds) and new ideas and beliefs. We, too, practice polemics and syncretism. But, unlike our ancestors we are committed to pluralism. Nevertheless, we have much to learn from our rabbinic ancestors. They fought, they adapted, they changed, and they renewed, and the tradition lives on. We owe our present to the rabbis, and hopefully through our modern interpretations we will, as they did for us, preserve the tradition for the coming generation.

CHAPTER 1

1. Mishnah Haggigah 2:1.

2. Tosefta Haggigah 2:1.

3. This is not to say that Genesis 1:1-2:6 were not read in public. Mishnah Megillah 3:6 (also Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anith 26a) tells us that on Ma'amadoth, the story of Creation (Maaseh Bereshit) is read.

4. Jerusalem Talmud, Haggigah 77a.

5. Tosefta Haggigah 2:2.

6. Mishnah Haggigah 2:1.

7. See: E.E. Urbach, The Sages. p. 189ff., also the controversial view of Samson Levy, "The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition", Judaism, Fall 1972, Iss. 84, Vol. 21, Num. 4.

8. Bereshit Rabbah 2:4.

9. Tosefta Haggigah 2:5, Jerusalem Talmud, Haggigah II, 77a,b, Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 15a.

10. Jerusalem Talmud,Haggigah II, 77a,b; Tosefta Haggigah 2:5.

11. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 15a.

12. Bereshit Rabbah 2:4- "v'lo sh'hu yamim kelim uven zoma b'olam." "And it was not but a few days and the son of Zoma was in his {eternal-Soncino} home."

Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 15a- "Amar lahem Rabbi Yehoshua l'talmidav adayin ben Zoma m'ba'hutz." "And Rabbi Joshua said to his students, 'Ben Zoma is still on the outside.'"

Jerusalem Talmud, Haggigah II, 77a,b- "Amar Rabbi Yehoshua l'talmidav harei ben Zoma m'ba'hutz. v'lo h'yu yamim kelim sh'niftar ben Zoma." "Rabbi Joshua said to his students, 'Behold, Ben Zoma is still on the outside.' And it was but a few days until Ben Zoma died."

Tosefta Haggigah 2:5- Amar lahem Rabbi Yehoshua l'talmidav kevar ben Zoma m'ba'hutz. Lo h'yu yamim mo'a'tim ad sh'nistalek ben Zoma." "Rabbi Joshua

said to his students, `Ben Zoma has already been [long since- Neusner translation of the Tosefta] on the outside.´ It was only a few [short] days until Ben Zoma was removed."Bereshit Rabbah 1:10.

13. See Bereshit Rabbah 8:2. The debate on what one may study and from what day was not even completely settled by the end of the Amoraic period (end of fourth [Babylonian Talmud] and end of fifth [Jerusalem Talmud] centuries). The opening verse of the Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar [An eighth century collection of midrashic works on the "works of creation"] states that: "Rabbi Eleazar Ben Hyrkanos began his discourse `Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord, or make all His praise to be heard?´ (Ps. 106:2). Is there anyone who can `express the mighty acts´ of the Holy One, blessed be He, or `make all His praise be heard?´ The ministering angels cannot even tell of the details of His mighty acts. [And yet it is permitted] for us to expound upon what He did, and what He will do in the future for the sake of His creations exalting the name of the Holy one, Blessed be He that He created from one end of the world until the other as it is said, `One generation shall laud Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts´ (Ps. 144:5).

14. Bereshit Rabbah, Tosefta, Babylonian Talmud.

15. Isaiah 20:22, Job 37:6.

16. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 11b

17. Parallel version: Tosefta 2:7, see text on page 15f.

18. Encyclopedia Judaica. 4:227.

19. Bereshit Rabbah 1:10, [my translation].

20. Pesikta Rabbati 21. This midrash´s redaction is generally dated to the medieval period.

21. Bereshit Rabbah 1:6.

22. Mishnah Haggigah 2:1.

23. Tosefta Haggigah 2:7. There are some slight variences between this baraita and the parallel mishnah. First, the baraita changes the mishnah´s recording of directions that one was not permitted to explore. In the Mishnah, it was stated that one could not look at "what is above", "what is below", and "Mah Lefaneem" and "Mah L´ahor". The conclusion

of the baraita, however, changed these two phrases to "Mah Haya", "what was", and "Mah Atid Lihyot", "what will be". The gemara (Haggigah 11b) on this mishnah also utilized the argument laid out in the baraita, but did not make reference to the change in vocabulary. Similarly, it used the phrases from the Mishnah and not those that were used by the Tosefta.

24. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 11b.

25. Tosefta Haggigah 2:7

26. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 11b.

27. Bereshit Rabbah 1:10.

28. Jerusalem Talmud, Haggigah II, 1; 77c.

29. Albeck, Ch. and Theodor, J. Midrash Bereshit Rabbah, Wahrmann Books. Jerusalem, 1965. p.2 note on line 6 of Bereshit Rabbah 1:5 and Urbach, E. The Sages. trans. Israel Abrahams, Magnes Press, The Hebrew University. Jerusalem, Israel. Vol. 2:775, note #51.

30. Bereshit Rabbah 1:5.

31. ibid.

32. ibid, 1:10.

33. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kamma 55a.

34. Bereshit Rabbah 8:7, parallel Ruth Rabbah 2:3.

35. Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 5a.

36. Pesikta Rabbati 23:5.

37. Bereshit Rabbah 3:8, parallel (not as complete) ibid, 2:5.

38. ibid, 3:7.

39. parallel- Bereshit Rabbah 9:2.

40. See notes: ed. Theodor, p. 23; trans. Freedman, Vol. 1, note 2, p 23.

41. Shemot Rabbah 30:3

42. Koheleth Rabbah 3:11.1, parallel- Bereshit Rabbah 9:2.

43. Bereshit Rabbah 9:2.

44. Bereshit Rabbah 3:6.

45. Bemidbar Rabbah 18:22. A parallel version of this midrash is found in the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 74b. "Rab Judah in the name of Rav said: In the hour that the Holy One, Blessed be He, desired to create the world, He said the the Prince of the Sea (sar shel yam), `Open your mouth and swallow all of the waters of the world.´ He said to God, `Lord of the Universe, it is enough that I stand {Soncino-remain} with my own.´ Immediately He [God] kicked him and killed him as it is said: `He stirreth up the sea with His power and by His understanding He smitteth through Rahab´ (Job 26:12). What makes this midrash particularly interesting is that its authorship is ascribed to Rav, who according to the midrash from Bereshit Rabbah 1:5 (p.12) was opposed to the study of the "works of creation".

Bereshit Rabbah 1:5- R. Huna in the name of Bar Kappara. According to Theodor-Albeck notes on line 6 this passage should be ascribed to Rav. This passage is in favor of the study of the "works of creation."

Bemidbar Rabbah- This version of the midrash is anonymous.

Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 74b- This passage which exemplifies a method of studying the "works of creation" is attributed to R. Judah in the name of Rav. When juxtaposed, the credibility of the attributed authorships must be questioned. No firm conclusions, however, can be ascertained as to who the actual authors were.

46. Pesikta Rabbati 20.

47. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a.

48. Bereshit Rabbah 8:8.

49. ibid, 8:9.

50. Devarim Rabbah 2:33.

51. Bereshit Rabbah 1:7.

52. ibid, 8:9.

53. ibid.

54. Devarim Rabbah 2:13.

55. Bereshit Rabbah 8:9.

56. ibid, 8:8.

57. Bereshit Rabbah 1:7 is composed of arguments indicating when the angels were created. "When were the angels created: R. Johanan said: They were created on the second day....R. Hanina said: They were created on the fifth day....R. Luliani b. Tabri said in R. Issacs name: Whether we accept the view of R. Hanina or that of R. Johanan, all agree that none were created on the first day, lest you should say, Michael stretched {the world} in the south and Gabriel in the north, while the Holy One, blessed be He, measured it in the middle...Ordinarily, a mortal king is honoured in his realm and the great men of the realm are honoured with him....The Holy One, blessed be He, however, is not so, but He alone created His world, He alone is glorified in His universe. R. Tanhuma quoted: `FOR THOU ART GREAT AND DOEST WONDERFUL THINGS´ (Ps.86:10) Wherein does His greatness lie? Because `THOU GOD ART ALONE´: Thou alone didst create the world. Hence, `IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED.´"

58. Bereshit Rabbah 8:3.

59. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 9a.

60. Pesikta Rabbati 21.

61. Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Bechodesh 5.

## CHAPTER 2

1. See Chapter Three, p 74ff.

2. Bereshit Rabbah 12:10, a similar midrash is found in the Pesikta Rabbati 21, but whose message is about good and evil.

3. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 21a.

4. See Freedman trans. Bereshit Rabbah, note #2, p.132.

5. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 36.

6. See Chapter One, p. 17, on Bereshit Rabbah 1:5.

7. Bereshit Rabbah 1:9, see also Freedman translation, Vol. 1, note #6, p. 8.

8. Bereshit Rabbah 12:5.

9. Shemot Rabbah 15:22.

10. Owens, Joseph. A History of Ancient Western Philosophy, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey. pp. 7ff.

11. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 12a.

12. Bereshit Rabbah 4:7

13. ibid.

14. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 4.

15. Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54a.

16. ibid, Haggigah 12a.

17. Bereshit Rabbah 4:7.

18. See Chapter One, pp. 20ff.

19. Bereshit Rabbah 1:8.

20. ibid, 1:1.

21. Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:11.

22. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 3.

23. Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54a.

24. ibid. See Freedman trans., note #11, p. 265. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 3 offers the same list but in a slightly different order.

25. Bereshit Rabbah 1:4.

26. ibid.

27. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 37.

28. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 12a.

29. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 3.

30. Bereshit Rabbah 11:9.

31. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 12a.

32. Bereshit Rabbah 1:15, Bereshit Rabbah 12:14, Shemot Rabbah 25:6, Vayikra Rabbah 36:1.

33. Complete versions: Bereshit Rabbah 1:15
Vayikra Rabbah 36:1

Condensed versions: Bereshit Rabbah 12:14
Shemot Rabbah 25:6

34. Bereshit Rabbah 12:14.

35. Vayikra Rabbah 36:1.

36. ibid.

37. Babylonian Talmud, Haggigah 12a, Abrahams trans. note #11, p. 66.

38. Guttmann, Alexander. Rabbinic Judaism in the Making, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1970, p. 59ff.

39. See same chapter, p. 60.

40. Bereshit Rabbah 9:14.

41. ibid.

42. Avot deRabbi Natan 2:37.

43. See Appendix II, Saldarini, Anthony J., The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, E. J. Brill. Breiden, 1975. pp. 306 ff.

44. ibid, notes on p. 217.

45. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 3.

## CHAPTER 3

1. Avot DeRabbi Natan, Version A: 31.

2. Bereshit Rabbah 3:9.

3. ibid, 8:6.

4. ibid 8.

5. Bereshit Rabbah 17:4, Bemidbar Rabbah 19:3, Koheleth Rabbah 7:23, Pesikta Rabbati 14:9.

6. Koheleth Rabbah 7:23, parallel- Pesikta Rabbati 14:9.

7. Bereshit Rabbah 17:4 end.

8. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 8.

9. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

10. Bereshit Rabbah 8:5.

11. Urbach, E. E. The Sages, p. 229.

12. Bereshit Rabbah 8:10.

13. Koheleth Rabbah 6:10.

14. Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Beshallach 7. From Lauterbach trans. Note #3: "The suffix of mimmenu is not that of the first person plural but of the third person singular. The verse then is interpreted to mean: `Like one who by himself can, or should know, to chose good or evil." (p. 248). parallels- Bereshit Rabbah 21:5, Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:9.

15. Bereshit Rabbah 12:8, parallel-Vayikra Rabbah 9:9.


16. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

17. Varients- Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 11, Avot deRabbi Natan, Version 2: 1 and 42.

18. Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 8a, parallel Berachot 61a.

19. Bereshit Rabbah 14:8.

20. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a&b. Shachter

trans. Note #11: [Akra di Agma] "a town near Pumbeditha, notorious on account of the loose morals of its inhabitants." (p. 241).

21. ibid, Note #9.

22. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 11.

23. Bereshit Rabbah 20:10, "FOR DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN"(Gen. 3:19). R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Here Scripture hints at resurrection, for it does not say, 'FOR DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU go, but SHALT THOU RETURN.' From Freedman trans. Note #8: "which he interprets: thou shalt go to dust, yet shalt thou return- at the resurrection." (Vol.1, p. 169).

24. See Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 8 and 42.

25. Koheleth Rabbah 2:12.

26. ibid.

27. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 11.

28. Bereshit Rabbah 14:8.

29. Urbach, E.E., The Sages. p. 230.

30. ibid, p. 228.

31. Bereshit Rabbah 8:1, parallel- Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 61a.

32. Vayikra Rabbah 14:1.

33. Bereshit Rabbah 8:1, 21:3, 24:2, and Vayikra Rabbah 18:2.

34. Bereshit Rabbah 8:1, parallel- ibid 24:2.

35. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

36. Urbach, The Sages, p. 229. See also Ginzburg, L. Legends of the Jews, Vol. 5, p. 79, Note # 22. See also I Corinthians 15:45-49, doctrine of Jesus as second Adam.

37. Koheleth Rabbah 8:2.

38. Vayikra Rabbah 20:2, Pesikta Rabbati 14:10 and 23:6. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 58a (both heels).

39. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5.

40. Pesikta Rabbati 23:6.

41. Bereshit Rabbah 3:9.

42. Koheleth Rabbah 8:2.

43. Bereshit Rabbah 8:10.

44. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a. The english translation of Sadducces is based on variant readings where the word Sadducce was probably written in place of minim ("heretic", "Christian") by either a censor or a Jewish editor. The Hebrew version used for this study had minim written.

45. Bemidbar Rabbah 16:24.

46. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 3:5.

47. Bereshit Rabbah 8:4.

48. ibid.

49. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 61a.

50. ibid, Sanhedrin 38b.

51. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version A: 31.

52. ibid.

53. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38a.

54. Pesikta Rabbati 23:1, see also Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 42.

55. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 21a, Rosh Hashanah 32a.

56. Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, ed. Maria Leach, (citation "Names"), p. 781f.

57. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 11.

58. Koheleth Rabbah 7:23, Pesikta Rabbati 14:9, 14:10, Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 8.

59. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

60. Bereshit Rabbah 1:12.

61. ibid, 25:2.

62. It is at this point in the chapter that I will begin referring to the first human as two seperate entities; Adam and Eve. Previously I attempted to remain consistent by calling the first being, either "the first human" or "humankind". This was done so as to alleviate any confusion which would develop with the separation into Adam and Eve. Thus, with the creation of Eve, so, too, Adam becomes a new being.

63. Vayikra Rabbah 14:1.

64. Bereshit Rabbah 8:1.

65. Vayikra Rabbah 14:1, this passage ascribes its authorship to R. Levi.

66. Bereshit Rabbah 14:7.

67. ibid 18:2, parallel- 80:5.

68. Babylonian Talmud, Erubin 18a,b.

69. ibid, Sanhedrin 39a.

70. ibid.

71. Bereshit Rabbah 17:7.

72. ibid, 17:6.

73. ibid, 18:1, parallel- Babylonian Talmud, Nidah 45b.

74. Bereshit Rabbah 17:8.

75. ibid, 8:11.

76. Babylonian Talmud, Erubin 18b.

77. ibid.

78. Koheleth Rabbah 7:2.

79. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version A: 4. Cohen trans. Note #11: "`with hair plaited´. The Talmud, Ber. 61a (Sonc. ed., p. 382), Shab. 95a (Sonc. ed., p. 454), connects the Heb. root for `build´ (banah) with binyatha, a word used in the coastal towns for `plaits´, and explains that God plaited Eve´s hair.

80. Bereshit Rabbah 17:2.

81. Koheleth Rabbah 9:9.

CHAPTER 4

1. Bereshit Rabbah 14:6.
2. Koheleth Rabbah 3:1.
3. Bereshit Rabbah 14:6.
4. ibid, 17:4.
5. Chapter 3, p. 74ff.
6. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 13. The midrashim on Sam´mael and the angels´ rebellion has roots in ancient mythology. While this particular passage attributes the angels´ jealousy towards humankind, the majority of midrashim direct the angels´ jealousy towards God.
7. ibid, 14.
8. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version A: 1.
9. Bereshit Rabbah 18:6, parallel- ibid, 85:2.
10. Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 9b.
11. Bereshit Rabbah 19:1.
12. ibid.
13. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 1.
14. Bereshit Rabbah 19:3.
15. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 1.
16. Bereshit Rabbah 19:4.
17. See Saldarini trans. Note #41, p. 33f.
18. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version A: 1.
19. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 13, parallel- Avot deRabbi

Natan, Version B: 1, this version says "l`chol adam" ("everyone") whereas Pirke deRabbi Eleazar says "l`chol habriyot" ("all creatures").

20. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 1, parallel- Bereshit Rabbah 19:10, Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 13.

21. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 13.

22. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 1.

23. Bereshit Rabbah 20:8.

24. Bereshit Rabbah 22:2, parallel- ibid 20:11.

25. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 42.

26. ibid, Version B: 1.

27. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

28. Pesikta Rabbati 7:2.

29. Pirke deRabbi Eleazar 14.

30. Devarim Rabbah 5:10.

31. Bereshit Rabbah 19:1.

32. ibid.

33. ibid, 20:5.

34. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 42.

35. Bemidbar Rabbah 5:4.

36. Bereshit Rabbah 5:9.

37. Babylonian Talmud, Erubin 100b.

38. Bemidbar Rabbah 10:2.

39. Avot deRabbi Natan, Version B: 42.

40. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b.

41. Bereshit Rabbah 12:6, parallels- ibid 19:8, Shir Hashirim Rabbah 3:5, Pesikta Rabbati 19:3.

42. Pesikta Rabbati 14:10.

43. Bereshit Rabbah 2:3.

44. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 3:5, parallel- Pesikta Rabbati 19:3.

45. Pesikta Rabbati 5:7, parallel- Shir Hashirim Rabbah 5:1.

46. Bemidbar Rabbah 23:13.

47. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:9, parallel- Mekilta deRabbi Ishmael, Beshallach 7 (Lauterbach trans. p. 248).

48. Bereshit Rabbah 15:6.

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