

Bereshit 1:26-27

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ
וַיְרִידוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ
וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
וַיְבָרָא אֱלֹהִים | אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ
בְּצֶלְמֵם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

²⁶And God said: “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.”

²⁷And God created humankind in the divine image, creating it in the image of God – creating them male and female.

1. Rashi on Gen. 1:26-27¹

בצלמנו - בדפוס שלנו: כדמותינו - להבין ולהשכיל:

“In our image.” With our mold. “As our likeness.” **To understand and to gain wisdom.**

בצלם אלהים ברא אותו - פירש לך שאותו צלם המתוקן לו צלם דיוקן יוצרו הוא:

“In the image of God, God created him” [this verse] has explained to you that that mold which is fixed for him is the image of the semblance of his Creator.

זכר ונקבה ברא אותם - ולהלן הוא אומר (בראשית ב) ויקח אחת מצלעותיו וגו' במדרש אגדה שנבראו שני פרצופים בריאה ראשונה ואח"כ חלקם...

“Male and female [God] created them.” And further on it says, “And [God] took one of his sides, etc.” An aggadic Midrash that God created (the human) with two faces at the original creation, and afterward divided them...²

2. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Part One, Chapter 1³

Humanity possesses . . . intellectual apprehension. In the exercise of this, no sense, no part of the body, none of the extremities are used; and therefore this apprehension was likened to the apprehension of the Deity, which does not require an instrument, although in reality it is not like the latter apprehension but only appears so to the first stirrings of opinion. **It was because . . . of the divine intellect conjoined with man, that it is said that the human is “in the image of God and in God’s likeness” (Gen. 1:26-27), not that the exalted God is a body and possesses a shape.**

1. Shlomo Yitzchaki 1040 1105, Provence.

2. Bereshit Rabbah 8:1

אמר רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון אנדרוגינוס בראו הדא הוא דכתיב זכר ונקבה בראם א"ר שמואל בר נחמן בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון דיו פרצופים בראו ונסרו ועשאו גביים גב לכאן וגב לכאן איתבין ליה והכתיב ויקח אחת מצלעותיו אמר להון מתרין סטרוהי היך מה דאת אמר (שמות כו) ולצלע המשכן דמתרגמינן ולסטר משכנא וגו' רבי תנחומא בשם רבי בנייה ורבי ברכיה בשם ר"א אמר בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון גולם בראו והיה מוטל מסוף העולם ועד סופו הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קלט) גלמי ראו עיניך וגו' רבי יהושע בר נחמיה ורבי יהודה בר סימון בשם רבי אלעזר אמר מלא כל העולם בראו

Rabbi Jeremiah ben Leazar said: When the Holy Blessed One created Adam, God created him an hermaphrodite, for it is said, “Male and female God created them and called their name Adam (Gen.5:2). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: When Adonai created Adam God created him double-faced, then split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side. . . . Rabbi Tanhuma in the name of Rabbi Banayah and Rabbi Berekiah in the name of Rabbi Leazar said: God created him as a lifeless mass extending from one end of the world to the other; thus it is written, “Your eyes saw my unformed substance (Ps. 139:16). Rabbi Yehoshua ben Rabbi Nehemiah and Rav Yehudah ben Rabbi Simon in Rabbi Leazar's name said: God created him filling the whole world.

3. Moses ben Maimon, 1138–1204, Spain, Morocco, Egypt.

3. Sforzo on Gen. 1:26-27⁴

כדמותנו. בענין המעשיות שידמה במ קצת לפמליא של מעלה בצד מה שהם פועלים בידיעה ובהכרה. אמנם פעולתם היא בלתי בחיריית וביזה לא ידמה להם האדם. ובקצת ידמה האדם לאל ית' הפועל בבחירה. אמנם בחירת האל ית' היא לעולם לטוב ולא כן הבחירה האנושית. ועם זה הנה האלהית על אופן נכבד מאד יותר מן הבחירה האנושית. ולכן אמר כדמותנו כמו דמותנו לא כדמותנו האמיתי:

“Kidmuteinu.” With regard to actions, which are partly similar to the heavenly retinue, in that they act with **knowledge and conscious awareness**, except that their [the angels'] actions lack **free will**, and in this regard the human being is not like them. And the human is partly similar to the Blessed God, who acts freely, except that the free will of the Blessed God is always for the good, which is not true of human free choice; as such, Divinity is of a different order of honor and magnitude than the human will. And therefore the text says “kidmuteinu” -- **“like” Our image, but not in truth like Our image.**

4. Moshe Cordovero, *Tomer Devorah*, Chapter One⁵

It is proper for a person to emulate his Creator, for then he will attain the secret of the Supernal Form in both image (*tzelem*) and likeness (*demut*). For if a person's physical form reflects the Supernal Form, yet his actions do not, he falsifies his stature. People will say of him, “A handsome form whose deeds are ugly.” For the essential aspect of the Supernal “Form” and “Likeness” is that they are deeds of the Holy Blessed One. Therefore, what good is it for a person to reflect the Supernal Form in physical form only if his deeds do not imitate those of his Creator?

5. Samson Raphael Hirsch on Gen. 1:26, 27⁶

Kidmuteinu . . . *domeh*: to be similar to. As *damah* at the same time means to be silent, so that the idea of similarity here is construed that the similarity of the object must be “silent” towards that to which it is similar, i.e., may in no way contradict it, the likeness to God expected of Man is expressed to be primarily negative, that in his whole being he does not foster anything which would contradict the divine truth, love, justice and holiness. Like God no man can be, but similar to Him he should be, should not tolerate anything in himself or with himself which is contradictory to God.

[1:27] This sentence [God created humanity in the image of God] repeated again and again, that the mortal frame of Man is one which is worthy of God and commensurate with the godly calling of Man, shows what definite value the Torah lays on recognition of the godlike dignity of the human body. And actually the whole Torah rests primarily on making the body holy. The whole mortality of human being rests on the fact that the human body, with all its urges, forces and organs, was formed commensurately with the godly calling of Man, and is to be kept holy and dedicated exclusively to the godly calling. Nothing digs the grave of the moral calling of Man more effectively than the erroneous conception which cleaves asunder the nature of Man.⁷

4. 16th century, Italy.

5. Known as the Ramak, 1522–1570, Safed Kabbalist.

6. Late 19th century, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

7. Cf. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Image, the Glory, and the Holy,” in *Humanity Before God -- Contemporary Faces of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Ethics*, ed. by William Schweiker, Michael A. Johnson and Kevin Jung (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 2006), pages 137-38

All of these attributes of humanity: being the *tselem* ‘Elohim, “the image of God” (*imago Dei*), having *kavod* (“glory”), and being *qadosh* (“holy”) refer to behavior. But what about the physical body? . . . [R]ather than conclude that the human body was not . . . a sacred object, Jewish thinking turned to another aspect of God: the name of God, which, they held, was placed in the human body. The Midrash *Tanḥuma* tells us that God placed God's name *Shaddai* (usually translated the “Almighty”) on the human form: the *shin* is the humanoid nose that sticks out from the face; the *dalet* the arm with beding elbow and the hand with opposite thumb; and the *yod* the genitalia (penis and clitoris) that create human sexuality. In this way, even after people no longer thought of God as having a body, the human body retained both its God-like nature and the aura that surrounded it. Each human being comes both in the image of God and in God's name to be God's agent on earth.

. . . [T]his biblical language and thinking provides an alternative to the long use of the language of self-abnegation and submission. While ostensibly preaching humbleness, this language has provided a rationale and justification for ignoring human responsibility for the world and for each other. The Bible's triple concepts of *kavod*, *qadosh*, and, above all, the *tselem* ‘Elohim, demand that human beings fulfill their destiny

6. HaKetav v'HaKabbalah on Gen. 1:26-27⁸

כדמותנו. כהתדמות אלינו וטעמו כערך שיטהר האדם את עצמו בעיונו ובמעשיו לעלות מעלה מעלה

“Like Our likeness.” That he would become ever more like Us. And its meaning is that a person should purify himself in thoughts and deeds to ascend higher and higher . . .

7. Rabbi Hayim of Volozhin *Nefesh HaHayim*, Chapter One, Sections 2-3⁹

It is . . . necessary to understand why it is said, “in the image of *Elohim*,” rather than in the image of any other name of God. The reason is that the name *Elohim* denotes that God’s Blessed Name is Master of all Powers. . . . Just as in the original creation of all worlds God created and originated them by the Divine Power *ex nihilo*, so, indeed, their power of existence and their structure at all times and at every instant, depend solely upon the influx of new light with which it will please God’s Blessed Name to permeate them. And were God to remove the Powers of Divine influence even for one moment, they would vanish into void and nothingness. . . .

This explains why God is called the Master of all Powers. God is Master of every individual power which exists in the world. It is God who gives them their force and energy at all times, and they are always in the Divine hand to change and arrange as God wishes.

In a similar fashion Adonai created Man and gave humanity dominion over myriads of powers and over numberless Worlds. These were all transferred to human beings that we may conduct them through every detail of our movements, in deeds, words and thoughts. Our guidance of these powers may be either good, or (Heaven forbid), the opposite of good. For with our good deeds, words and thoughts we sustain and give energy to numerous Powers and Holy Celestial Worlds. . . . But on the other hand, by deeds, words or thoughts which not good (Heaven forbid!) we destroy countless and numberless powers and Holy Celestial Worlds . . .

This, then, is what is signified by the verse, “And Elohim created humanity in God’s own image; in the image of Elohim God created the human” (Gen. 1:27). Just as God’s Blessed Name is Elohim, which signifies that God is master of all Powers which exist in all the Worlds, and that God arranges them and lead them at every instant according to the Divine will; in the identical fashion God’s Blessed Will gave humanity dominion to rule over myriads of Powers and Worlds through each of our specific acts and dealings, at every instant, according to the Celestial World in which that act, word, or thought is rooted, as though we were actually master of the energy of those Worlds.

8. Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, pp. 9-10, 12-13, 17-18, 21-23¹⁰

We all know that the Bible offers two accounts of the creation of man. . . . [T]he answer lies . . . in a real contradiction in the nature of man. The two accounts deal with two Adams, two men, two fathers of mankind, two types, two representatives of humanity, and it is no wonder that they are not identical. . .

Let us portray these two men. Adam the first and Adam the second, in typological categories.

There is no doubt that the term "image of God" in the first account refers to man's inner charismatic endowment as a creative being. Man's likeness to God expresses itself in man's striving and ability to become a creator. Adam the first who was fashioned in the image of God was blessed with great drive for creative activity and immeasurable resources for the realization of this goal, the most outstanding of which is the intelligence, the human mind, capable of confronting the outside world and inquiring into its complex workings. In spite of the boundless divine generosity providing man with many intellectual capacities and interpretive perspectives in his approach to reality, God, in imparting the blessing to Adam the first and giving him the mandate to subdue nature, directed Adam's attention to the functional and practical aspects of his intellect through which man is able to gain control of nature. . . . Adam the first is interested in just a single aspect of reality and asks one question only--"How does the cosmos function?" He is not fascinated by the question, "Why does the cosmos function at all?" nor is he interested in the question, "What is its essence?" He is only curious to know

as images of God to treat others as they would treat God. All human beings are sacrosanct and must not be killed. That is the barest minimum of righteous action. To that we add our responsibility to supervise the world to ensure its well-being, and then we behave in such a way as to “grow” our *kavod* and to be *qadosh*. We are the presence and face of God in this world. That is both our nature and our challenge.

8. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, early 19th century, Leipzig. Opponent of Reform Judaism.

9. 1749-1821. Rabbi, Talmudist, and ethicist.

10. Contemporary American (d. 1993). Rosh Yeshiva at YU Rabbinical School.

how it works. . . .

Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques, and saves lives is blessed with dignity. Man of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who needed several days to travel from Boston to New York was less dignified than modern man who attempts to conquer space, boards a plane at the New York airport at midnight and takes several hours later a leisurely walk along the streets of London. The brute is helpless, and, therefore, not dignified. Civilized man has gained limited control of nature and has become, in certain respects, her master, and with his mastery he has attained dignity as well. His mastery has made it possible for him to act in accordance with his responsibility.

Hence, Adam the first is aggressive, bold, and victory-minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker (*imitatio Dei*). . . .

Adam the second is, like Adam the first, also intrigued by the cosmos. Intellectual curiosity drives them both to confront courageously the *mysterium magnum* of Being. However, while the cosmos provokes Adam the first to quest for power and control, thus making him ask the functional "how" question, Adam the second responds to the call of the cosmos by engaging in a different kind of cognitive gesture. He does not ask a single functional question. Instead his inquiry is of a metaphysical nature and a threefold one. He wants to know: "Why is it?" "What is it?" "Who is it?" (1) He wonders: "Why did the world in its totality come into existence? Why is man confronted by this stupendous and indifferent order of things and events?" (2) He asks: "What is the purpose of all this? What is the message that is embedded in organic and inorganic matter, and what does the great challenge reaching me from beyond the depths of my tormented soul mean?" (3) Adam the second keeps on wondering: "Who is He who trails me steadily, uninvited and unwanted, like an everlasting shadow, and vanishes into the recesses of transcendence the very instant I turn around to confront this numinous, awesome and mysterious "He"? Who is He who fills Adam with awe and bliss, humility and a sense of greatness, concurrently. . . Who is He whose life-giving and life-warming breath Adam feels constantly and who at the same time remains distant and remote from all?"

In order to answer this triple question, Adam the second does not apply the functional method invented by Adam the first. He does not create a world of his own. Instead, he wants to understand the living, "given" world into which he has been cast . . . He encounters the universe in all its colorfulness, splendor, and grandeur, and studies it with the naivete, awe and admiration of the child who seeks the unusual and wonderful in every ordinary thing and event. . . He looks for the image of God not in the mathematical formula or the natural relational law but in every beam of light, in every bud and blossom, in the morning breeze and the stillness of a starlit evening. . . .

9. Or HaHayim on Gen. 1:26¹¹

בצלמנו כדמותנו אפשר שיכוין לומר שיהיה בו צד הרחמים וצד הדין להפעיל בהם דרכי הדין ודרכי הרחמים לאשר יכונו והבן והוא סוד אומרו (להלן ב ז) וייצר ה' אלהים וגו':

"In Our image and in Our likeness." It is possible that the intention was to say that there would be within Adam a side of compassion (*rahamim*) and a side of judgment (*din*), to activate (set in motion, cause) through them the ways of judgment and the ways of compassion, as intended. Understand this. And this is also secret of the verse (Gen. 2:7), "Adonai Elohim formed (*vayyitzer*).

10. Zohar II, Shemot, 70b (on Gen. 5:1)¹²

בדמות דאדם איהו כהאי חיוו דאתחזי דיוקנין ביה. ואינון דיוקנין לא קיימיין בההוא חיוו בדיוקנא בקיומא אלא מתעברן מינייה. אוף הכי בדמות אלהים. . . . תו זה ספר תולדות אדם לדיוקנין בריא דדיוקנין דבר נש לאשתמודעא באינון תולדות דבר נש

[I]t is said that God made humanity in the "likeness" of God. By the word "likeness" we are to understand a kind of mirror in which images appear momentarily and then pass away. . . . Furthermore: "This is the book of the generations of Adam," i.e., the book which reveals the inner meaning of the features of humanity, so as to teach the knowledge of human nature.

11. Rabbi Hayyim ben Moshe ibn Atta, 1696-1743, Moroccan Kabbalist and Talmudist.

12. First publicized by Moses de León (c. 1240 – 1305), but pseudonymously attributed to R. Shimon bar Yozhai (c.100 CE).

11. Sfat Emet, Likutim, Parashat Bereshit¹³

ועל זה כתיב בצלמנו שהאדם נברא שישלים הוא את עצמו על ידי מעשיו וכאילו הוא עושה עצמו אף כי הוא על ידי כח הש"י, וזה הטעם שניתן הבחירה לאדם כי אם הי' נברא טוב הי' העש'י פחיתות אצלו ועתה היא יתרון על ידי השלמת עצמו כנ"ל:
For this reason it is written, "in Our image," i.e., that Adam was created in such a way that he would complete himself, by means of his deeds, as if he made himself, even though it is by means of the power of the Holy Blessed One. And it is for this reason that free will was given to humanity. . .

11. Simhah Bunem, Kol Simha, on Bereshit 1:26¹⁴

ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו וכו' (בראשית א' כו). אדם מגזרת אדמה. אחר שנעשה הכל מפואר ומהודר רצה השם להראות מעשיו שיראה הכל. והמציאות, לבד מאדם, לא ישיג כי אם כל אחד - עצמו. ברא השם את האדם והוא כח כולל מעליונים ותחתונים אשר יוכל לדמות הכל בנפשו. וזה מהות אדם שיראה ויבין וידמה, לא זולתו, והוא נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותינו בכף הדמיון, כי לא ישער אלא הדומה קצת - בדומה:
"God said, Let us make the human in Our image" "Adam" from the decree of the "adamah." After everything magnificent and beautiful was created, HaShem wanted to show the Divine work, that all would be seen. And without Adam, nothing within creation could perceive anything except itself. HaShem created Adam, with the powers of both the heavenly and earthly creatures, in that we are able to compare (לדמות) everything to ourselves. And this is the nature/essence of humanity, that we can see and understand and compare, outside of ourselves, and this is "let us make the human in Our image, like our likeness," with the power of comparison.

12. Rav Nachman of Bratslav, Likutei Moharan, II 5¹⁵

"נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ". 'כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ' זֶה כַּחַם הַמְדָּמָה, שֶׁהוּא בְּצַלְמֵנוּ בְּבַחֲיִינַת מַלְאָךְ, בְּחִינַת חֲלוּם עַל-יְדֵי מַלְאָךְ, כִּי בְּשַׁעַת שִׁנְיַת הַמַּחַם מִסְתַּלֵּק, וְאֵינוֹ נִשְׁאָר רַק בְּחִינַת כַּחַם הַמְדָּמָה, וְכִשְׁהַמַּחֲיִין זָכִים, אֲזַי גַּם הַכַּחַם הַמְדָּמָה שֶׁנִּשְׁאָר הוּא בְּבַחֲיִינַת מַלְאָךְ, בְּחִינַת: כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ בְּצַלְמֵנוּ . . .

"[L]et us make Adam in Our image and according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). "According to our likeness" -- this is the power of comparison and metaphor, which is in the Divine image in the aspect of an angel, that is, "a dream by means of an angel." Because when a person sleeps, his consciousness leaves him, and what remains is only the power of metaphor. And when the consciousness is pure, then the power of metaphor which remains is in the aspect of an angel, in the aspect of "according to Our likeness in Our image" . . .

13. Avivah Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture*, p. 191¹⁶

It is the measure of the great *tzaddik* to be capable of asking questions, "without irritably reaching after fact and reason." R. Nachman says elsewhere (Likkutei 2:52): "This is the way that the human being is like God: God, too, has unanswerable questions." In asking questions of God, against God, without answers, the human being enacts his likeness to God.¹⁷

13. Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905, Ger (Poland).

14. Rabbi Simcha Bunim Bonhardt of Peshischa (Poland), c.1765-1827.

15. 1772-1810, Ukraine. Grandson of the Baal Shem Tov.

16. Contemporary; Glasgow and Jerusalem.

17. Rav Nahman of Bratslav, Likkutei Moharan, II, 52

מה שְׁקִשָּׁה קְשִׁיוֹת עַל הַצְּדִיקִים, זֶהוּ מִכְרַח לְהִיּוֹת. כִּי הַצְּדִיקִים מִתְדַּמִּים לְיוֹצְרָם, כְּמוֹבָא, וְכִמוֹ שְׁקִשָּׁה קְשִׁיוֹת עַל הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ, כְּמוֹ - כִּן בְּהִכְרַח שִׁיחָהּ קִשָּׁה קְשִׁיוֹת עַל הַצְּדִיק, כִּי הוּא מִתְדַּמֶּה אֵלָיו יִתְבָּרַךְ:

As for the questions of/against the *tzaddik* (righteous person), this is inevitable. Because the *tzaddikim* are similar to their Creator, and just as there are unanswerable questions directed to/against God, so too, it is inevitable that there will be unanswerable questions against the *tzaddik*, who is similar to God.