



## **Gender Identity in Rabbinic Literature**

***Dr. Marcus Mordecai Schwartz***

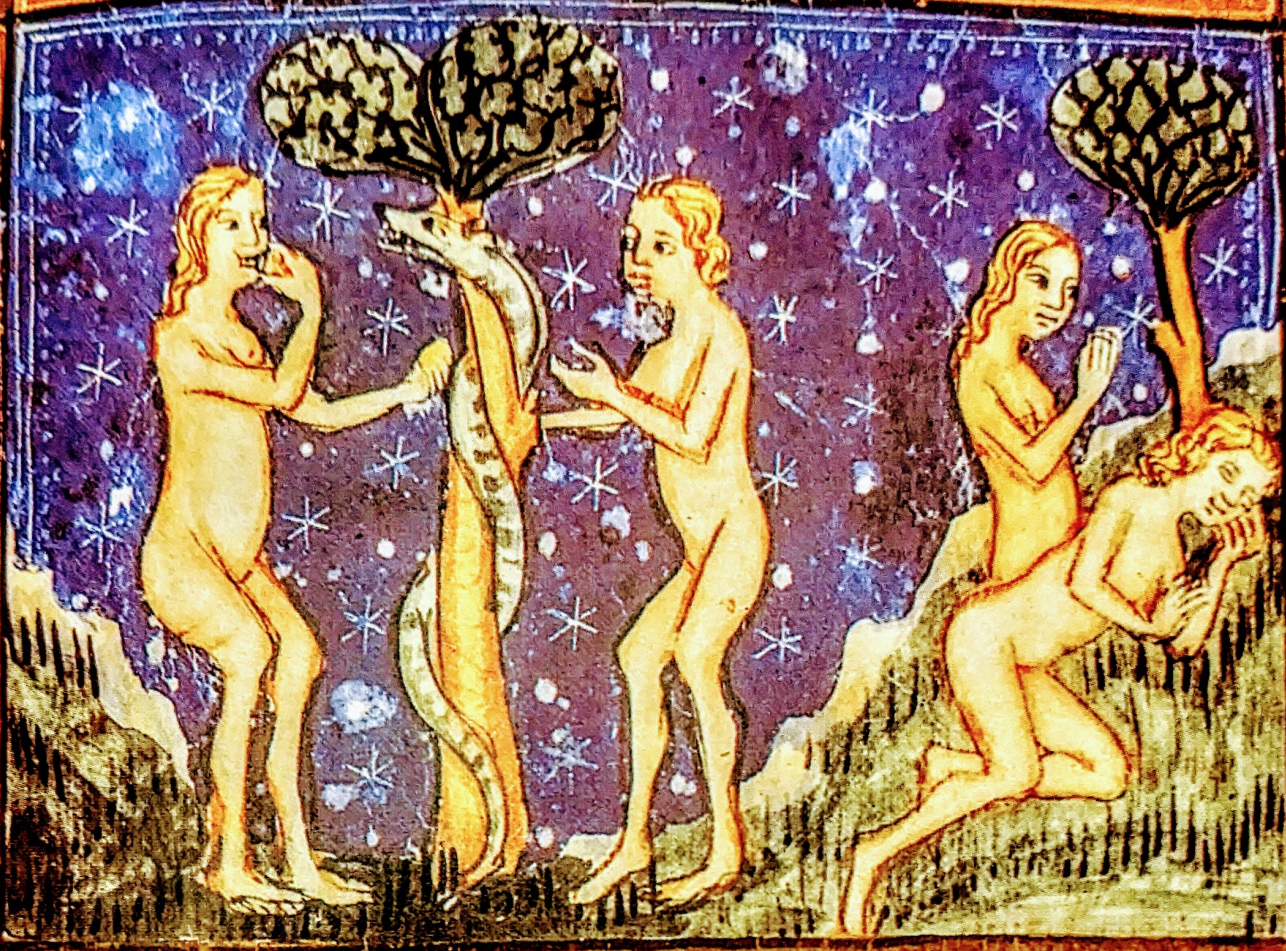
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וְכָל־יְמֵי חַיֵּיכֶם עֹשֶׂה אֶת־צִוִּי אֵלֶיךָ וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־עֵצֵי הַיְצִיבָה וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־אֲבֵנֵי הַיְצִיבָה וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־אֲבֵנֵי הַיְצִיבָה

וְכָל־יְמֵי חַיֵּיכֶם עֹשֶׂה אֶת־צִוִּי אֵלֶיךָ



וְכָל־יְמֵי חַיֵּיכֶם עֹשֶׂה אֶת־צִוִּי אֵלֶיךָ וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־עֵצֵי הַיְצִיבָה וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־אֲבֵנֵי הַיְצִיבָה וְלֹא־תִסְרְפוּן אֶת־אֲבֵנֵי הַיְצִיבָה



תהילים קל"ט:ב'-ט"ז

אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שְׁבַתִּי וְקוֹמִי בְנִתָּה לְרַעִי מֵרְחוֹק:  
אַרְחִי וְרַבְעִי זָרִיתָ וְכָל-דַּרְכֵי הַסִּפְנָתָה: כִּי  
אֵין מִלָּה בְּלִשׁוֹנִי הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כְּלָה: אַחֲנֹר  
וְקִדְמִי צִרְתָּנִי

...

כִּי-אַתָּה קִנִּיתָ כְּלִיתִי תִּסְכְּנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי:  
אוֹדֶךָ עַל כִּי נִזְרַאתָ נִפְלִיתִי נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ  
וְנִפְשִׁי יָדַעַת מְאֹד: לֹא-נִכְתַּד עֲצָמֵי מִלְּמַדְךָ  
אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי בַסֶּתֶר וְלִקְמָתִי בַתְּחִתִּיּוֹת אֶרֶץ:  
גְּלַמִּי וְרֵאיוֹ עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל-סִפְרְךָ כָּלְמִם יִכְתְּבוּ יָמִים  
יֵצְרוּ (ולא) [ולן] אֶתְּךָ בָהֶם:

*Psalms 139:2-16*

When I sit down or stand up You know it; You discern my thoughts from afar. You observe my walking and reclining, and are familiar with all my ways. There is not a word on my tongue but that You, O LORD, know it well. You formed me front and back;

...

You who created my conscience; You fashioned me in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am awesomely, wondrously made; Your work is wonderful; I know it very well. My frame was not concealed from You when I was shaped in a hidden place, knit together in the recesses of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed limbs; they were all recorded in Your book; in due time they were formed, to the very last one of them.

2

בראשית ב':כ"א-כ"ה

וַיִּפֹּל ה' אֱלֹקִים וַתִּרְדָּמָה עַל-הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן  
וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעוֹתָיו וַיִּסְגָּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה:

*Genesis 2:21-25*

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot.

וַיִּבְרָא ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת-הַצֶּלֶע אֲשֶׁר-לָקַח  
מִן-הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבִאָהּ אֵל-הָאָדָם:

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפַּעַם עָצָם מֵעַצְמִי  
וּבֶשֶׁר מִבְּשָׁרִי לָזָאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ  
לְקָחָהּ זָאת:

עַל-כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק  
בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהֵינּוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

וַיְהִי שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא  
יִתְבָּשְׂשׁוּ:

And the LORD God fashioned the rib  
that He had taken from the man into a  
woman; and He brought her to the man.

Then the man said, "This one at last Is  
bone of my bones  
And flesh of my flesh.  
This one shall be called Woman,  
For from man was she taken."

Hence a man leaves his father and  
mother and clings to his wife, so that  
they become one flesh.

The two of them were naked, the man  
and his wife, yet they felt no shame.

3

בראשית רבה ח:א'

אָמַר רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁבְּרָא  
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן,  
אֲנִדְרוּגִינוֹס בְּרָאוּ, הִדָּא הוּא דְכַתִּיב  
(בראשית ה, ב): זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בְּרָאָם.

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָן, בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁבְּרָא

*Bereishit Rabbah 8:1*

Said R. Yirmiyah ben Elazar: In the hour  
when the Holy One created the first  
human, He created him [as] an  
androgynous [androgynos], as it is said,  
"male and female He created them". Said  
Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman: In the hour  
when the Holy One created the first  
human, He created him double-faced

הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן, דִּי  
פְּרָצוּפִים בְּרָאוּ, וְנִסְרוּ וְעָשְׂאוּ גַבִּים, גַּב לְכָאן  
וְגַב לְכָאן.

אֲתִיבּוֹן לֵיהּ וְהִכְתִּיב (בראשית ב, כא): וַיִּקַּח  
אֶחָת מִצְלַעְתָּיו,

אָמַר לְהוֹן מִתְרִין סְטְרוּהִי, הֵיךְ מָה דְאֵתָּ  
אָמַר (שמות כו, ב): וְלָצֶלַע הַמִּשְׁכָּן,  
דְּמִתְרַגְּמִינָן וְלִסְטֵר מִשְׁכַּנָּא וּגוּ.

רַבִּי תַנְחוּמָא בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי בְּנֵיָה וְרַבִּי בְּרַכְיָה  
בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר, בְּשַׁעָה שְׁבָרָא  
הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן גְּלָם  
בְּרָאוּ, וְהָיָה מוּטָל מִסּוּף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוּפֵן,  
הָדָא הוּא דְכְתִיב (תהלים קלט, טז): גָּלְמִי  
רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּגוּ.

רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בַּר נַחֲמִיָּה וְרַבִּי יְהוֹדָה בַּר סִימּוֹן  
בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר מְלֵא כָּל הָעוֹלָם  
בְּרָאוּ, מִן הַמְּזֻרַח לְמַעַרְב מְנִין, שְׁנָאָמַר  
(תהלים קלט, ה): אַחֲוֹר וְקִדְם צִרְתָּנִי וּגוּ.

[du-par'tsufin], and sawed him and made  
him backs, a back here and a back  
[t]here, as it is said, "Before/achor and  
behind/kedem You formed me" [Ps. 139:5].  
They objected to him: But it says, "He  
took one of his ribs [tsale'otav]" [Gen.  
2:21]! He said to them: [It means, one of]  
his sides [sit'rohi], just as you would say,  
"And for the side [tsela] of the Tabernacle  
[mishkan]" [Ex 26:20], which they  
translate [in Aramaic] "for the side [setar]  
of the mishkan". Rabbi Tanchuma in the  
name of Rabbi Banayah, and Rabbi  
Berachyah in the name of R. Elazar said:  
'In the time that the Holy One of  
Blessing created the First Human [Adam  
HaRishon], [as] a golem He created him  
and he was extended from [one] end of  
the world and unto its [other] end –  
that's what is written: "Your eyes did see  
my unformed substance [golmi], " [Ps  
139:16]. Rabbi Yehoshua bar Nechemiah  
and Rabbi Yehudah bar Simon said in  
Rabbi Elazar's name said: He created him  
[Adam] filling the whole world. From  
where [do we know he extended] from  
the East to West? That it's said: "Back  
and front You formed me" [Ps 139:5].

*Plato's Symposium (the speech of Aristophanes)*

*The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word "Androgynous" is only preserved as a term of reproach. In the second place, the primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond. He could walk upright as men now do, backwards or forwards as he pleased, and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his four hands and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast.*

...

*Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods... Doubt reigned in the celestial councils. Should they kill them and annihilate the race with thunderbolts, as they had done the giants, then there would be an end of the sacrifices and worship which men offered to them; but, on the other hand, the gods could not suffer their insolence to be unrestrained.*

*At last, after a good deal of reflection, Zeus discovered a way. He said: "Methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more profitable to us. They shall walk upright on two legs, and if they continue insolent and will not be quiet, I will split them again and they shall hop about on a single leg." He spoke and cut men in two, like a sorb-apple which is halved for pickling, or as you might divide an egg with a hair; and as he cut them one after another, he bade Apollo give the face and the half of the neck a turn in order that the man might contemplate the section*

of himself: he would thus learn a lesson of humility. Apollo was also bidden to heal their wounds and compose their forms. So he gave a turn to the face and pulled the skin from the sides all over that which in our language is called the belly, like the purses which draw in, and he made one mouth at the centre, which he fastened in a knot (the same which is called the navel); he also moulded the breast and took out most of the wrinkles, much as a shoemaker might smooth leather upon a last; he left a few, however, in the region of the belly and navel, as a memorial of the primeval state.

*After the division* the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one, they were on the point of dying from hunger and self-neglect, because they did not like to do anything apart; and when one of the halves died and the other survived, the survivor sought another mate, man or woman as we call them, being the sections of entire men or women, and clung to that. They were being destroyed, when Zeus in pity of them invented a new plan: he turned the parts of generation round to the front, for this had not been always their position and they sowed the seed no longer as hitherto like grasshoppers in the ground, but in one another; and after the transposition the male generated in the female in order that by the mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed, and the race might continue; or if man came to man they might be satisfied, and rest, and go their ways to the business of life: so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man.

5

עירובין י"ח א:ט"ו-כ"ז *Eruvin 18a:15-27*

<p>אָמַר רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר: דִּיּוּ פְרָצוּף פְּנִים הָיָה לוֹ לְאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אָחֹר וְקִדְּם צִרְתָּנִי". כְּתִיב: "וַיִּבֶן ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת</p>	<p>R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: The first man had two countenances, for it is said in Scripture: You have shaped me front and back. It is written: And the Lord God built the side, etc. Rab and Samuel [differ</p>
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הַצֵּלַע וְגוֹי", רַב וְשִׁמוּאֵל: חַד אָמַר פְּרָצוּף,  
וְחַד אָמַר זָנָב.  
בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמַאן דְּאָמַר פְּרָצוּף — הֵיִינוּ  
דְּכִתְיִב "אַחֹר וְקִדְם צִרְתָּנִי". אֲלֵא לְמַאן  
דְּאָמַר זָנָב — מַאי "אַחֹר וְקִדְם צִרְתָּנִי"?  
בְּדַרְבֵּי אַמִּי, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי אַמִּי: אַחֹר לְמַעֲשֵׂה  
בְּרֵאשִׁית, וְקִדְם לְפִוְרַעְנוּת.  
בְּשִׁלְמָא אַחֹר לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית — דְּלֵא  
אַיְבָרֵי עַד מַעְלֵי שַׁבָּתָא, אֲלֵא וְקִדְם  
לְפִוְרַעְנוּת מַאי הֵיא?  
אַיְלִימָא מְשֻׁם קִלְלָה — הָא בְּתַחֲלִיָּה  
נְתַקְלַל נָחֵשׁ, וְלַבְּסוּף נְתַקְלַלָּה חַוָּה, וְלַבְּסוּף  
נְתַקְלַל אָדָם!  
אֲלֵא לְמַבּוּל, דְּכִתְיִב: "וַיַּיְחַם אֶת כָּל הַיְקוּם  
אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה  
וְגוֹי".  
בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמַאן דְּאָמַר פְּרָצוּף, הֵיִינוּ דְּכִתְיִב  
"וַיִּצְר" תְּרִין יוּדִין.  
אֲלֵא לְמַאן דְּאָמַר זָנָב — מַאי "וַיִּצְר"?

on the meaning of 'side']. One explains: A  
countenance and the other explains: A  
tail. According to him who explained: 'a  
countenance', it was quite proper for  
Scripture to state: You have shaped me  
front and back; but according to him  
who explained: 'A tail', what [could be the  
meaning of] Thou hast shaped me  
behind and before? — As R. Ammi  
explained, for R. Ammi said: [Adam was]  
behind [last] in the work of the creation  
and before [the others] for retribution.  
One may well concede that he was  
'behind in the work of the creation', since  
he was not created before the Sabbath  
eve; what means, however, 'Before [the  
others] for retribution'? Shall I say [it  
refers] to the curse, surely, [it could be  
objected] was not the serpent cursed  
first, Eve afterwards and Adam last? —  
But [it refers] to the flood; for it is  
written in Scripture: And He blotted out  
every living substance which was upon  
the face of the ground, both man and  
cattle, etc. According to him who  
explained: 'a countenance' it is easy to see  
why And He formed [wa-yizer] was  
written in Scripture with two yods;  
according to him, however, who

בְּדַרְבֵי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן פַּזִּי, דָּאֲמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן

פַּזִּי: אֹי לִי מִיִּצְרָן, אֹי לִי מִיִּצְרָי.

בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמַאן דָּאֲמַר פְּרָצוּף, הֵיִינוּ דְכַתִּיב

"זָכַר וַיִּנְקְבָה בְּרָאִים".

אֲלֵא לְמַאן דָּאֲמַר זָנַב — מַאי "זָכַר וַיִּנְקְבָה

בְּרָאִים"?

לְכַדְרֵי אָבָהוּ. דְרַבִּי אָבָהוּ רָמַן, כְּתִיב: "זָכַר

וַיִּנְקְבָה בְּרָאִים", וְכַתִּיב: "כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים

בְּרָא אוֹתוֹ".

בְּתַחֲלָה עָלְתָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְבְרָאוֹת שְׁנַיִם,

וּלְבַסּוּף לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא אֶחָד.

בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמַאן דָּאֲמַר פְּרָצוּף, הֵיִינוּ דְכַתִּיב:

"וַיִּסְגֹּר בְּשֵׁר תַחֲתָנָה", אֲלֵא לְמַאן דָּאֲמַר

זָנַב — מַאי "וַיִּסְגֹּר בְּשֵׁר תַחֲתָנָה"?

אָמַר רַב זְבִיד, וְאִיתִימָא רַבִּי יְרֵמְיָה,

וְאִיתִימָא רַב נַחְמָן בַּר יֶזְעָק:

לֹא נִצְרְכָה אֶלָּא לְמָקוֹם חֲתָךְ.

בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמַאן דָּאֲמַר זָנַב, הֵיִינוּ דְכַתִּיב:

explained: 'A tail' what [could be the significance of] 'And he formed'? — [It may be explained] in agreement with R. Simeon b. Pazzi, for R. Simeon b. Pazzi said, 'Woe to me on account of my evil inclination; woe to me on account of my creator', According to him who explained: 'A countenance' it was quite correct for Scripture to write: Male and female created He them; but according to him who explained: 'A tail', what [could be the interpretation of] 'Male and female created He them'?- [The text was required] for [an explanation] like that of R. Abbahu. For R. Abbahu pointed out an incongruity: It is written in Scripture: Male and female created He them. Previously it is written: In the image of God created He him; [and he explained:] At first it was the intention that two should be created but ultimately only one was created. According to him who explained: 'A countenance', the expression of 'And closed up the place with flesh instead thereof', is quite intelligible; but according to him who explained: 'A tail', what [could be the meaning of] 'And closed up the place with flesh instead thereof'? — R. Zebid (or as some say: R.

"ויבן", אלא למאן דאמר פרצוף — מאי  
"ויבן"?

לכדרבי שמעון בן מנסיא.

דדריש רבי שמעון בן מנסיא: "ויבן ה'  
אלהים את הצלע" —

מלמד שקילעה הקדוש ברוך הוא לחנה  
והביאה לאדם הראשון,

שכן בכרפי היס קורין לקלעיתא בנייתא.

Nahman b. Isaac) replied: The text refers only to the place of the cut. According to him who explained: 'A tail' it was quite proper for Scripture to write: And He built, but according to him who explained: 'A countenance', what [could be the significance of] 'And He built'? — In agreement with that which has been stated by R. Simeon b. Menassia. For R. Simeon b. Menassia made the following exposition: 'And the Lord God built the side' teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, plaited Eve's hair and then brought her to Adam, for in the sea-towns a plait is called 'building'.

6

כתובות ז' בי"א-ח' א:ט'

תנו רבנן: מברכין ברפת חתנים בעשרה כל  
שבועה. אמר רב יהודה: והוא שבאו פנים  
חדשות.

מאי מברך?

אמר רב יהודה: "ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך  
העולם, שהכל ברא לכבודו".

ו"יוצר האדם".

*Ketubot 7b:11-8a:9*

Our Rabbis taught: The blessing of the bridegrooms is said in the presence of ten [persons] all the seven days. Rab Judah said: And that is only if new guests come.

What does One say?

Rab Judah 'and: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created all things to his glory'.

and 'the Creator of man',

and 'who has created man in his image.

ו"אֲשֶׁר יֵצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם דְמוֹת  
תְּבַנְיָתוֹ, וְהִתְקִין לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנִין עַד־עַד בְּרוּךְ  
אַתָּה ה', יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם".

"שׂוֹשׁ תְּשִׂישׁ וְתִגַּל הַעֲקָרָה, בְּקִבוּץ בְּנֵיהָ  
לְתוֹכָהּ בְּשִׂמְחָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְשַׂמַּח צִיּוֹן  
בְּבָנֶיהָ".

"שִׂמַּח תְּשַׂמַּח רִיעִים הָאֲהוּבִים, כְּשִׂמַּח  
יְצִירְךָ בְּגַן עֵדֶן מִקֶּדֶם, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְשַׂמַּח  
חֲתָן וְכַלָּה".

"בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
בְּרָא שִׂשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה, חֲתָן וְכַלָּה, גִּילָה, רִינָה,  
דִּיצָה, חֲדוּדָה, אֶהָבָה וְאַחֻוּהָ וְשָׁלוֹם וְרִיעוּת.

מְהֵרָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמַע בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה  
וּבְחוּצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם קוֹל שִׂשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה,  
קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה, קוֹל מְצַהֲלוֹת חֲתָנִים  
מְחוּפְּתִים וְנֹעְרִים מְמַשְׁתָּה נְגִינָתָם, בְּרוּךְ  
אַתָּה ה', מְשַׂמַּח חֲתָן עִם הַכַּלָּה".

In the image of the likeness of his form,  
and has prepared unto him out of  
himself a building forever. Blessed art  
thou, O Lord, Creator of man'.

'May the barren greatly rejoice and exult  
when her children will be gathered in her  
midst in joy. Blessed art Thou, O Lord,  
who maketh Zion joyful through her  
children'

'Mayest Thou make the loved  
companions greatly to rejoice, even as of  
old Thou didst gladden Thy creature in  
the Garden of Eden. Blessed art Thou, O  
Lord, who maketh bridegroom and bride  
to rejoice!'

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our King, God  
of the universe, who has created joy and  
gladness, bridegroom and bride, rejoicing,  
song, mirth, and delight, love, and  
brotherhood, and peace, and friendship.  
Speedily, O Lord our God, may be heard  
in the cities of Judah, and in the streets  
of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and the  
voice of gladness, the voice of the  
bridegroom and the voice of the bride,  
the voice of the singing of bridegrooms  
from their canopies and of youths from  
their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O

לוי איקלע לבי רבי בהלוליה דרבי שמעון  
בריה, בריך חמש. רב אסי איקלע לבי רב  
אשי בהלוליה דמר בריה, בריך שית.

לימא בהא קמיפלגי: דמר סבר חדא יצירה  
הוא, ומר סבר שתי יצירות הוא. לא, דכולי  
עלמא חדא יצירה הוא.

מר סבר בתר מחשבה אזלינן, ומר סבר  
בתר מעשה אזלינן.

כי הא דרב יהודה רמי, פתיב: "ויברא  
אלהים את האדם בצלמו", וכתיב: "זכר  
ונקבה בראם", הא ביצד? בתחלה עלה  
במחשבה לבראות שנים, ולבסוף נברא  
אחד.

Lord, who maketh the bridegroom to  
rejoice with the bride'.

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, 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: It is written, And God  
created man in his own image, and it is  
written, Male and female created He  
them. 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.