

# CHEVRAH TORAH 5778...Seeking ✨ Spirituality

## Shabbat BREISHIT

Genesis 1:24-31

### KEY KOSHI:

WHAT DOES OUR CREATION “b’tselem” MEAN FOR US/GOD/FOR OUR WORLD?

**P’SHAT—AWARENESS...** The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are

24] God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” And it was so. 25] God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. 26] And God said, “Let us make man 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.” 27] And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28] God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” 29] God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. 30] And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so. 31] And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

24 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ  
בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיֵּיתוֹ-אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן :  
25 וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת-  
הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ  
וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב : 26 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים גַּעֲשֵׂה  
אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדַמוֹתֵנוּ וַיְרֵדוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבַעֲוֹף  
הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-רֶמֶשׂ  
הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ : 27 וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-  
הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר  
וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם : 28 וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים  
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-  
הָאָרֶץ וּכְבַשְׁתֶּהּ וַרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבַעֲוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וּבְכָל-חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל-הָאָרֶץ : 29 וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב אֲשֶׁר  
אֵשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-יֵבֹ  
פְּרִיעֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ : 30 וְלִכְל-  
חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל-עֹוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל אֲרֵמֶשׂ עַל-  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-יֵבֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב  
לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן : 31 וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר  
עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם  
הַשֵּׁשִׁי :

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוֵּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

**REMEZ—UN-SELF-AWARENESS...** God showed Moses a Torah of black fire written on white fire.

The negative ground on and by which all things can be read is itself a message.

V.27 *And God created Adam in His Image. In the Image of God He created him; male and female He created them*

**RASHI**...Everything else was created through the word of God, but ADAM was created through God's own hands, as the verse explains, "*B'Tsalmo*"—in the mould that was especially made for him." The apparently superfluous *B'Tsalmo* teaches us that man's creation was different than all other elements, as it is written, "*And You have placed your Hands upon me.*" [Ps 139:5]

**ETZ HAYIM**...In the ancient Near East, the ruling king was often described as "in the image or likeness of a god," serving to elevate the monarch above ordinary mortals. In the Bible, this idea became democratized—every human being is created in the "*image of God.*"

**ABARVANEL**...The word *TSELEM* comes from the root "*TSEL—shadow.*" Just as a shadow is intimately linked with matter, man's intellect is linked with his body. This is what it meant when it says, "*after our Image, in our Likeness.*" Man consists of both the spiritual and the earthly.

**S'FORNO**... "*B'Tselem Elohim*" refers to man's power of reason—the intellect. Elohim represents the rational faculty. Man can only be created "*In the Image*" because his potential to attain perfect reason can never be perfected. "Adam" is a physical being with spiritual potential.

**KIMCHI**...The expressions *TSELEM* and *DMUT* are sometimes applied to the physical and on other occasions applied to the abstract, something spiritual. The Creator formed man using ingredients that are at home in the celestial regions as well as ingredients common in our domain...Even though man has been equipped—indeed created—to make matters spiritual his principal pursuit in life, not one in a thousand does so.

**RAMBAN**... "*In our Image—after our Likeness.*"...In the capacity of his body, he will be similar to the earth from which he was taken; his spirit he will be similar to higher beings, because the spirit is distinct from the body and will not die.

**RASHBAM**... "*B'Tselem Elohim*" That is 'in the image of angels...

**HA-K'TAV v'HA-KABBALAH**... I believe that Torah uses the term *TSELEM* instead of "*Tsurah*" in order to describe a spiritual phenomenon—a physical expression of spiritual qualities. It is parallel to when we describe a physical phenomenon such as a certain surface as "round" or "square," though it appears that way only to our physical eye. We only see its two-dimensional aspects; the inner-essence is not visible through external features...As to the interior form of a human being however, something which remains visible from the outside and can be perceived only through one's mental faculties, is called *TSELEM*. It is always synonymous with or associated with darkness... Needless to add, that *TSEL*—a shadow only appears dark, or black.

Just as the rays of light appear unable to penetrate the blackness of the shadow—to reveal our visible interior, so the spiritual qualities of man are visible only by means of his physical exterior...The combined expression "*B'Tsalmeynu Ki-Dmutyenu*" suggests that God will make man by incorporating in him hidden spiritual qualities...To the extent that man will strive to attain those attributes, there is always more to be seen...as a shadow implies there is always light...

**Prof J. GUTTMANN**...*TSELEM* refers to the personal relationship that can only be found between "persons." The personality of man is thus placed vis-à-vis the personality of God. For there is a religious approach (not Jewish) that sees the religious ideal in the effacement of man's personality. According to this approach, man's personality is regarded as a barrier between him and spiritual growth. But this is not the case here...Only as long as man is a person can he preserve his relationship with God. Each man is a world of his own, and he is not required to merge himself in nature or submerge his essence. Rather, through it does he come to reflect the "*Tselem*" in which he is created.

**D’RASH—READING BETWEEN THE WORDS...** The words of Torah are holy because they provide a glimpse into the infrastructure of being. They comprise a single “living organism animated by a secret life which streams and pulsates below the crust of its literal meaning”  
**Rabbi ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL...**

...What does it mean, asked Rabbi Hama bar Chanina, “You shall walk after the Lord your God”? [Deut 13:5] Is it possible for a human being to walk after the Shechinah? Has it not been taught: For the Lord your God is a devouring fire! The meaning is “to walk in God’s ways.” As He clothes the naked so shall you clothe the naked. As He visits the sick so shall you visit the sick. As He comforts the mourner so shall you comfort the mourner. [TALMUD, Sotah 14a]...If God were a theory, the study of theology would be the way to understand Him...

Engagement to God comes alive in acts of the soul...A Jew is asked to make a leap of action rather than a leap of thought. He is asked to do more than he understands, in order to understand more than he does. In carrying out the word of Torah he is ushered into the presence of spiritual meaning...Our way of living must be compatible with our essence as created in “*the likeness of God.*” We must beware lest our likeness be distorted or even forfeited. In our way of living we must remain true not only to our sense of power and beauty but also to our sense of the grandeur and mystery of existence. The true meaning of existence is disclosed in moments of living in the presence of God...

How should man—a being created in the likeness of God—live? It is in deeds that man becomes aware of what his life really is: his power to harm or hurt, to wreck and to ruin; of his ability to derive joy and bestow it upon others...It is in the employment of his will, not in reflection, that he meets his own self as it is...The heart is revealed in the deed...

Man is responsible for God’s deeds—and God is responsible for man’s responsibility....

God is waiting to enter our deed through our loyalty to His Law...What is at stake is the meaning of God’s Creation, not only the meaning of man’s existence. Religion is not a concern for man alone but a plea of God and a claim of man—God’s expectation and man’s aspiration.

...Not particular acts but all acts, life itself, can be established as a link between man and God...Beyond the idea of imitation of divinity goes the conviction of the divinity of deeds. Sacred acts do not only imitate; they represent the Divine in this world...The Bible speaks of man as having been created “*in the Image of God,*” establishing the principle of an **analogy of being**. In his very being, man has something in common with God. Beyond an analogy of being, the Bible teaches the principle of an **analogy of acts**. Man may act in the likeness of God. It is this likeness of acts—“*to walk in His ways*”—that is the link by which we may come close to God. To live in such likeness is the essence of “our Image”...and the purpose of our creation.

[God in Search of Man, 281-289]

**SOD—The SELF of the UNIVERSE...** God's "I am" has the psycho-theological force not of dissolving individual selves

but of reminding us that we were never individual selves in the first place... Our selfhood endures by virtue of its participation in some greater Self,

**B'REISHIT RABBAH...** "*male and female He created them...*" R' Yirmiyahu ben Lazar taught: Adam was made up of male and female—two bodies joined together. R' Shmu'el bar Nachmani taught: The Holy One created Adam double-faced, connected, back to back. Only after did God split Adam into two distinct beings...

**Prof. NORMAN COHEN...** In creating the first human being, God then created a person with two sides who had to be separated. With a bit of imagination, we can picture the unity called "Adam"—two sides back to back which never could see each other. What must it have been like for each half of the primordial human being to feel whole, yet always aware that there was another side shadowing it from behind? The irony, of course, is that the only way for the two sides of Adam to come to know each other was for the first human being to be split in two. Only by standing over and against, facing one another, can we truly become one... *In the Image* again.

**Prof AVIVAH GOTTLIEB ZORNBERG...**

Man's greatness, his creation "*in the Image of God*," locks in inescapable tension with his participation in a world of proliferation and change... He is attached to two mutually exclusive ways of being... The Talmud puns on the agony of the dilemma: "Woe to me, because of the One who formed me [Yotzri] and woe to me because of my unruly desires [Yitzri] In the fibers of his being, Adam belongs to both dimensions at once.

Kafka expresses a similar torment of irresolubility:

"He is a free and secure citizen of the world, for he is fettered to a chain which is long enough to give him the freedom of all earthly space, and only as long that nothing can drag him past the frontiers of this world. But simultaneously he is a free and secure citizen of Heaven as well, for he is also fettered by a similarly designed heavenly chain. So that if he heads, say, for the earth, his heavenly collar throttles him. And if he heads for Heaven, his earthly one does the same. And yet all possibilities are his, and he feels it. Even more, he actually refuses to account for the deadlock by an error in the original fettering.

[Parables and Paradoxes, Schocken]

Man is chained to incompatible universes of being... Yet... there is no error. He cannot live comfortably in either heaven or earth, while he is "a free and secure citizen" of both.

[The Beginning of Desire—Reflections on Genesis, Gottlieb Zornberg, pgs. 16-17.]