

Interfaith Week

Humanity, Created In the Image of Holiness A Visual Art Biblical Midrash Workshop

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MATERIALS

Note-taking and doodling capability

Drawing paper

Diverse colored papers

Scissors

Glue / glue stick

Simple drawing materials

Please try to make the time to read the material. These are longer texts that, in partnership with more succinct materials, will inform the presentation and be resources for your art-making.

BIBLICAL SOURCE TEXTS

Genesis 1.26-28

- וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: 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."

- וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים | אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא
אֹתָם: 27

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

- וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּכְבָּשׁוּהָ
וְרָדוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיַּיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ: 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."

Genesis 2.4-7

- אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בַּיּוֹם עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ
וּשְׁמַיִם: 4

Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When the LORD God made earth and heaven—

- וְכֹל | שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יְהִי בָאָרֶץ וְכָל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יֵצֵא כִּי לֹא
הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה: 5

when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil,

- וְאֵד יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת־כָּל־פְּנֵי־הָאֲדָמָה: 6

but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth—

- וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפֹּחַ בְּאַפּוֹ נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי
הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: 7

the LORD God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

- וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לִבְדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: 18

The LORD God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him."

- וַיִּצַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאָדָמָה כָּל־חַיֵּי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהִים לְרֹאשׁוֹ מִה־יִּקְרָאֵלָו וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵלָו הָאָדָם נִפְשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ: 19

And the LORD God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name.

- וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְלָעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא־מָצָא עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: 20

And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found.

- וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | תְּרַדְמָה עַל־הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעָתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: 21

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.

- וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | אֶת־הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבִאָהּ אֱלֹהִים: 22

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

- וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעַם עֲצָם מִעֲצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ־זֹאת: 23

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."

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CREATED AS ONE INDIVIDUAL

"It was for this reason that humans were first created as one person [Adam], to teach you that **anyone who destroys a life is considered by Scripture to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life is as if they saved an entire world.**" And also, to promote peace among the creations, that no person would say to their friend, "My ancestors

are greater than yours." And also, so that heretics will not say, "there are many rulers up in Heaven." And also, to express the grandeur of The Holy One [blessed be He]: For a man strikes many coins from the same die, and all the coins are alike. But the King, the King of Kings, The Holy One [blessed be He] strikes every man from the die of the First Man, and yet no man is quite like his friend. Therefore, every person must say, "For my sake the world was created." -- Sanhedrin 4:5

The mishnah proceeds with four different reasons why God at first created only one human being.

- The first reason is that it was meant to teach us that one human being is in and of himself or herself an entire world. Therefore, one who kills another person it is as if he destroys an entire world and one who saves another person it is as if he saves an entire world. ...
- The second reason is so that people will not brag about their lineage. Since we all come from the same person, no one can say "my father is greater than yours."
- The third reason is to prove to the heretics that there is only one God. If more than one person had been originally created people might claim that each God created his own human being.
- The fourth reason is to show the greatness of God, that although God created only one human, and each subsequent person is therefore stamped with Adam's genes, no two people look or are alike. This teaches us that each person must say that for their sake the world was created.

CREATION, MODELING THE BALANCE OF JUSTICE AND MERCY

Genesis Chapter 1:

And God said, "Let us make man [the adam; the earth-creature] in our image, after our likeness."

Genesis Rabbah 8.3:

With whom did God take counsel?

Rabbi Yehoshua in the name of Rabbi Levi said:

He took counsel with the works of heaven and earth, like a king who had two advisors without whose knowledge he did nothing.

Genesis Rabbah 8.5:

Rabbi 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,' while others urged, 'Let him not be created!' Thus it is written, faithfulness and truth meet; justice and well-being / shalom kiss. -- Psalms 85.11

Genesis Rabbah 8.4:

Rabbi Berechiah said in the name of Rav: When the Holy One was about to create Adam, He saw both the righteous and the wicked who were to issue from him. So God said, if I create him, wicked people will issue from him; if I do not create him, how are the righteous people to be born? What did the Holy One do? God diverted the way of the wicked from before His sight, partnered the quality of mercy with God's self, [saying to it, let us make the human] and then created Adam.

Pirkei Avot:S

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, On three things does the world stand: On justice, on truth and on peace, for it is written, with truth, justice and peace shall you judge in your gates.

THE GENDER SPECTRUM IN THE CREATION OF ADAM

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: What kind of human creature does God call into being at the beginning of the world? For it is written: “AND GOD CREATED ADAM IN THE DIVINE IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD WAS ADAM CREATED; MALE AND FEMALE GOD CREATED THEM” (Genesis 1:27). Is *Adam* a man or a hermaphrodite, single-sexed or doubly endowed?

LEAH THE Namer ANSWERS: It’s hard to know, because the Hebrew language is a gendered tongue. Every verb—for example, “create”—identifies its subject as either male or female.

ESTHER THE HIDDEN ONE REVEALS: But the verse “MALE AND FEMALE GOD CREATED THEM” strains against these grammatical limits—just as the Holy One, in creating our world, transcended the limits of matter and energy.

MIRIAM THE PROPHET ADDS: Just as God once created a new world out of the void, so too can we reshape our world to renew that creation.

From the Five Books of Miriam – a Women’s Commentary on the Torah

Terms for Gender Diversity

In Classical Jewish Texts

זָכָר - **Zachar**: This term is derived from the Hebrew word for a pointy sword and refers to a phallus. It is usually translated as “male” in English.

נְקִבָּה - **Nekevah**: This term is derived from the Hebrew word for a crevice and probably refers to the vaginal opening. It is usually translated as “female” in English.

אַנְדְּרוֹגִינוֹס - **Androgynos**: A person who has both “male” and “female” sexual characteristics. 149 references in Mishna and Talmud; 350 in classical Midrash and Jewish law codes.

טוּמְטוּם - **Tumtum**: A person whose sexual characteristics are indeterminate or obscured. 181 references in Mishna and Talmud; 335 in classical Midrash and Jewish law codes.

אֵילֹנוֹיִת - **Aylonit**: A person who is identified as “female” at birth but develops “male” characteristics at puberty and is infertile. 80 references in Mishna and Talmud; 40 in classical Midrash and Jewish law codes.

סָרִיס - **Saris**: A person who is identified as “male” at birth but develops “female” characteristics at puberty and/or is lacking a penis. A person can be “naturally” a saris (referred to as a “saris chamah”) or can become one through human intervention (“saris adam”). 156 references in Mishna and Talmud; 379 in classical Midrash and Jewish law codes.

In Contemporary Discourse

Transgender: An umbrella term that can encompass anyone who doesn’t identify with the gender assigned at birth. This includes people who take medical steps to modify their appearance and those who do not. Some transmen and transwomen identify completely with their preferred gender (male or female), while other transpeople do not. They identify instead with an alternate “non-binary” gender identity that sits on a continuum between 100% male and 100% female. There are some Jewish transpeople who have adopted the terms *androgynos* or *tumtum* as a way to communicate that they are not identifying as exclusively male or female.

Transexual: A person who feels that his or her gender identity does not match his or her biological sex. Some transexuals, though not all, have sex reassignment surgery and/or take hormones to make their bodies look more male or female.

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Intersex: Approximately 1 in 2,000 people who are born with a combination of “male” and “female” physical traits such as chromosomes, genitalia, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Nonconforming: Anyone who doesn't “match” the expected roles and behaviors of the gender they were assigned at birth.

ON THE CREATION OF EVE: RIB, OR ... ? “HELPER” OR PARTNER?

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: Why does woman emerge from man's body?

LEAH THE Namer ANSWERS: *Tzela* does not precisely mean “rib” but rather “side.” Eve comes forth only as “FLESH OF [Adam's] FLESH,” not as “bone of [his] bone”—by C-section rather than by bone graft. Thus God serves as Adam's midwife, not his surgeon.

OUR MOTHERS CHIME IN: So you see, the two creation stories are not so different after all. In chapter 1, Adam is presented as both male *and* female; and in chapter 2, although woman *emerges* from the man's body, the man ultimately *merges* back with her. As it is written: “HENCE A MAN LEAVES HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND CLINGS TO HIS WIFE SO THAT THEY BECOME ONE FLESH” (2:24). In both cases, human wholeness depends upon an Other to complete the divine image.

From the Five Books of Miriam – a Women's Commentary on the Torah

Misconception: According to the traditional viewpoint, Chava was created from one of Adam's ribs.

Fact: According to the opinion of Rashi and many other medieval commentators, “woman” was created from one side of Adam, not from his rib.

Background: The creation of woman is described in Bereishit 2:21-22: “And the Lord God caused man (haAdam) to fall into a deep state of unconsciousness, and he slept; And He took one of his [sides or ribs, ‘tzela’] and closed up the place where it had been with flesh. And the Lord God built the tzela that he had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” There are three basic ways to understand which part of man was used to create woman: rib, side or tail.

- The explanation that is least known is found in the Talmud (Berachot 61a), where it is suggested that Chava was created from Adam's tail.
- The other two explanations are based on the translation of the word “tzela.” Shmuel in Bereishit Rabbah (17:6), who is cited by Chizkuni, asserts that tzela means “rib.” If indeed a rib was used, the logical follow-up question is, which rib did God take? The typical person has twelve ribs on each side;
- Shmuel states that he does not know which rib was taken, but that it was neither the uppermost nor the lowestmost. According to Targum (Pseudo-)Yonatan, God used the thirteenth rib from the right side to create Chava.
- Radal (12:33) on Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezar cites Likutei Torah that it was the sixth rib. Meam Loez on Bereishit 2:21-22 suggests that there are fifteen ribs on each side, and the thirteenth from the right side was used to create Chava.

Targum Onkelos translates tzela as il'ah, the Aramaic word for rib, found, for example, in Daniel 7:5. Another ancient targum, Targum Neofiti, also favors the rib translation. Abarbanel and Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon (Tzucker ed., 5744, p. 280) suggest that Adam was initially created with an extra rib expressly for the purpose of using it to create Chava. The Sdei Chemed cites the Siftei Kohen⁶ as claiming that animals have twelve ribs on one side and eleven on the other so that they should not be more complete than man, who had one rib taken from him! The Talmud states (top of Sanhedrin 39a) God

was not a “thief” as a consequence of this tzela-snatching because he took only one tzela from Adam and returned a complete maidservant to serve him. This statement indicates that the rabbis understood tzela to mean a “mere” rib and not a complete side. Seferorno does not explicitly state what tzela means, but by stating that God used a small amount of material, he indicates an acceptance of the translation of the word as rib.

But there is another way of understanding the word tzela, based on Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 8:1; Vayikra Rabbah 14:1); the Gemara (Berachot 61a) and the Zohar (Bereishit 34b-35a; Shemot 55a; 231a). As is known, there are two narratives detailing the creation of mankind—the first in chapter one of Bereishit, the second in chapter two. In the first account, according to some commentators, it appears that the Adam was not solely a male, but was rather a being consisting of both male and female halves. In chapter two, according to this explanation, this two-sided human was separated into the two genders, and it is this surgical procedure that is described in the verse.

According to the Zohar, the two top “yuds” that make up the Hebrew letter tzaddi represent this “double-faced” creature originally created by God. Sources debate whether the two beings faced the same direction or opposite directions; this argument forms the basis of the debate between Rabbi Yosef Karo and the Arizal regarding how to properly write a tzaddi.¹¹

In Bereishit Rabbah (17:6), Rabbi Shmuel bar Rabbi Nachman understands tzela as “side,” and Rashi and Ibn Ezra (Bereishit 2:21) adopt this approach as well. Rashi, following in the footsteps of the Midrash, supports his claim by pointing out that tzela is used in other places in Tanach to mean “side” as well (Terumah 26:20, 26-27). Rambam also accepts “side” as the correct translation (Guide to the Perplexed 2:30). Ralbag (Bereishit 2:21) accepts it and suggests that while Adam “slept,” God miraculously created a type of “placenta” attached to Adam’s side through which He created Chava.

The text seems to support the translation as “side” because in the description of the creation of woman, there is no mention of a soul being infused into Chava’s body. In the initial creation, (the double-sided) Adam was fashioned from dirt and God infused him with a “living soul” (2:7). This omission in the second creation story suggests that woman was created from something that already contained the breath of life and that a new infusion was unnecessary. Moreover, in the first creation story, the text constantly shifts, using both the singular and plural forms in reference to the “man” God created. Furthermore, the story includes a blessing to “them” to be fruitful and multiply (1:28). Both the use of plural and the blessing itself would indicate that there was a female (half) in existence at the time. Also, in the first creation story, the text uses the term “created” when detailing the making of man (“va’yivrah”) (1:27), while in the second story, Chava is not created ex nihilo and thus the text refers to her as being “built” (“va’yiven”) (2:22). All of these arguments support the view that Chava was taken from Adam’s side, as opposed to his rib. A final proof for this point of view is that nowhere else in Tanach is tzela used to mean “rib;” it is instead used exclusively as a side, usually in relation to a building.

Essentially, neither “rib” nor “side” is the sole “correct” translation of tzela in Bereishit 2:21-22. Rather, there are early sources for both translations. On the one hand, Targums Yonatan and Onkelos and an opinion in the Midrash favor “rib.” On the other hand, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rambam, Ralbag and a different opinion in the Midrash all prefer “side.” Some commentators, such as the Radak (Bereishit 2:21-22) present both opinions without a preference. The modern trend has been to follow the “spare rib” tradition; the vast majority of contemporary English versions of the Chumash translate tzela as rib.¹⁵

It would be interesting to know which tradition was more accepted in the pre-Tannaitic period. But unfortunately, several ancient sources, including the Septuagint (Bereishit 2:21-22), Josephus (Antiquities I:1:35) and Jubilees (3:5), do not seem to favor one translation over the other.¹⁶

Irrespective of whether woman was created from a side or a rib, she was created from “bone of my [Adam’s] bones and flesh of my flesh” (Bereishit 2:23),¹⁷ and in that manner differed from the rest of the creatures, over whom Adam was to have dominion. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 17:8) notes that unlike all other species in which male and female were created simultaneously from the same raw material, Adam was created from raw material and Chava from Adam, in order to maximize their affinity for each other. The question of whether a rib or a side was used is a technicality; what emerges from the creation story is the equality of the two genders.¹⁹

Rabbi Sa’adiah Gaon²⁰ explains that the creation of Chava from Adam’s tzela was done with wisdom: Because she was created from his rib, Adam will have mercy on Chava as one of his limbs, and she will regard him as the source of her life; he will look after her like one guards a piece of himself, and she will follow him the way a limb follows the body.

Indeed, it is a mistake to read the second creation story solely as a literal “surgery.” On a deeper level, it depicts the relationship between man and woman. In describing the account, Abarbanel states that Chava was not created from Adam’s foot so that he would not consider her a lowly maidservant, nor from his head so that she would lord over him. Rather, she was created from his side so that she would be equal to him.

The Ohr HaChaim sees a message in the creation of mankind—that each human male and female has a specific, unique partner that he or she is associated with, unlike animals (2:18, end). Ramban elaborates on this theme (Bereishit 2:24). Following the creation of woman from man’s tzela, from his flesh and bone, the verse in Bereishit states that man shall therefore “leave his father and his mother and ... cleave to his wife and be one flesh.” Rashi explains that this cleaving occurs via offspring. Ramban, however, rejects Rashi’s understanding because cleaving would then apply to animals, yet the verse treats it as a uniquely human experience. Ramban explains that the verse means that man should remain with woman, in contrast to animals who mate and then leave. Finally, it may very well be that because Chana was created from Adam’s body, the Talmud (Yevamot 62b) derives that a man should love his wife as his own body.

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EVE RECEIVES HER NAME

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: The Torah states that Eve’s Hebrew name, *Hava*, derives from *hai*, meaning “life,” because she is “THE MOTHER OF ALL THE LIVING” (3:20). If Eve is the *mother* of all life, does that make Adam the father?

LEAH THE Namer ANSWERS: Adam’s name derives from *adama*, “earth,” the source of *material* being; *hai* refers to the source of *spiritual* being. Or to avoid an unnatural dichotomy, Adam and Eve have birthed each other in complementary ways: from Adam’s sleep emerges Eve; from Eve’s awakening, Adam’s future.

- From the Five Books of Miriam – a Women’s Commentary on the Torah