

### THE THREE FACES OF ADAM

The Torah's story of Adam was never meant to be simply the biography of the first human being, a Biblical attempt to satisfy our idle curiosity about our origins. Rather, it is a source of what might be called Biblical anthropology, God's view of man.

It is therefore the stuff of profound interpretation as to the nature of man, from the earliest, brief insights of the Midrash to the latest philosophical dissertations. This morning, I apologize for attempting to introduce such an imposing topic in so brief a time, and will proceed to seek suggestions for three insights, all drawing on the name Adam. For the Torah hints, but never openly states, that the origin of the name is adamah, earth or ground, and therefore leaves open the question of the derivation of the name Adam and its significations.

Some distinguished Orientalists and lexicographers, assert that the Hebrew Adam is related to Assyrian adamu, to make or produce (Brown, Driver, & Briggs, Hebrew & English Lexicon of the Old Testament). From this derivation, we learn that man's superiority, his charismatic endowment, his spiritual dignity, lies in his technological genius. He is, like his Creator, creative. He was placed in the Garden of Eden le'avdah u-le'shamrah, to work it and to guard it, to develop it and improve it. A great scholar, Rabbi Leibele Eger, who became a Hasid of the Rabbi of Kotzk, once returned from a visit to his master and said that one of the three things he learned in Kotzk was: *ר' פסח לךר ה'ע לךר*: When asked what he meant thereby, he said: I learned that God created only bereshit, only the beginning--man must do all the rest. Man, Adam, must be adamu, a maker and producer and creator.

In a remarkable interpretation, the Sages revealed to us the same insight in yet another fashion. We read that when Abraham met the King of

Salem after defeating the captors of his nephew Lot, the King, Melchizedek, said to him: *שְׂתֵי פָנֶיךָ בְּיָד ה' - כֹּהֵן מֶלְכִּיזֶדֶק*,

usually translated as: "Blessed be Abram to God the Most High, Possessor (or: Creator, for *בָּרָא* actually means to make) of Heaven and Earth." The Rabbis, however, maintain that the last phrase, *שְׂתֵי פָנֶיךָ בְּיָד ה'*, refers not to God, but refers back to Abram! Melchizedek blessed Abram who was creator of heaven and earth, to God the Most High. What the Rabbis meant, of course, was that Abraham was the creator of the world in a spiritualized fashion, that is, by virtue of his merit and his righteousness he sustained the world. Today, however, we can give that Rabbinic statement a quite literal turn: man has become the master of earth and heaven as well! With our thrusts into space, we, the successors of Abraham, have extended our hegemony over the heavenly bodies as well as our own globe. Indeed, Rabbi Menachem M. Kasher, in an article which just appeared (Hapardes, Oct.1969), maintains that the landing on the moon was a fulfillment of a prophecy of Isaiah that has to do with the "end of days." Isaiah says that in the times of Messiah *וְהָיָה כְּהָיוֹתָהּ*, the moon will be embarrassed or ashamed (Is.24:23). Mankind once worshipped the Moon, then sang about her and admired her -- and now has landed men on the Moon, violating her integrity, humiliating her. We have established our mastery of our nearest neighbor.

Hence, by exercising our adamu function we enhance science, engineering, and medicine; we build cities, tame nature, and enjoy the benefits of modern life.

However, this is not the totality of man. Were it so, man would be nothing more than a machine with a computer on top. Unlike machines or animals, Adam has the capacity for personal relations. Man is involved not only with things, but with beings; he has not only a brain, but a heart, and this quality derives from the divine "breath of life" that God blew into the

nostrils of man (Gen.2:7).

In blatant disregard of the principles of scientific linguistics, a famous Talmudic scholar offers a penetrating insight into the nature of man, that is no less valid because of its faulty etymology. Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, the Rabbi of Prague, and known as the author of Noda Bi'Yehudah, ~~A~~vers (in his <sup>נסס</sup>) that the Hebrew <sup>נשקל</sup> comes from <sup>נשקל</sup>, which means, "I shall be like unto." Adam fulfills himself when he achieves adameh, when he compares himself to and imitates God, Who is a chanun, ve-rachum, ve-erekh apayim, merciful and gracious and patient. Adameh therefore spells the dimension of warmth and relatedness.

So man is more than a functionary, than a producer or consumer. He is more than a grocer or mechanic or lawyer or industrialist. He is a man! His net worth may be measured in dollars, but his ultimate and real worth can only be judged in terms of friendships and loves, of influence and good deeds.

There is a common maxim: "You can't take it with you." The Psalmist, however, put it slightly differently: <sup>כי לא יקח אדם עמו כלו</sup>, "for at his death a man shall not take everything with him" (Ps.49:18). We do not say that you can't take it with you absolutely; just that you can't take it "all" with you. But there are certain things that you can take along as your portion for the world-to-come: cherished memories, a good reputation, love, good deeds, mitzvot performed. The adamu function of man ceases with his last breath; the adameh function continues beyond that.

The conflict between the generations -- and it is not really between the generations as such as much as between two life styles and philosophies, one established and defensive, the other emerging and militant -- can be expressed as the attitude to the balance between adamu and adameh.

The pragmatic philosophy which made America great -- which ideologically funded Western civilization, spurred on science, and gave the impetus

to technology -- viewed Adam as adamu. Man's greatness lies in his creativity, his productivity, his mastery.

The new thinking, however, rejects this role as a major definition of man. It emphasizes not Adam as adamu but as adameh -- man's existential plight, his freedom, his love and his self-expression, his relations with his family, his neighbors, his community -- and his integrity. It desires not to build the mute world all around, but the living self within; not to produce but to experience; not to create but to relate. Hence, it views Adam not as adamu but as adameh.

The lines are being drawn in our times. The established generation takes a hard line against the revolutionaries, condemns all critics of society and the status quo as "Hippies." And there are times that the established segment of society invites excesses of criticism -- as, for instance, when Government announces with a flourish that last week we lost only 64 men in Vietnam -- meaning to say, that we are pleased it was so low, but revealing meanwhile its basic orientation: for the purpose of the smooth functioning of the military machine, 64 men are indeed expendable. In the same week, the financial leaders of Government inform us that by a stroke of good fortune and great wisdom, we have achieved a 4% degree of unemployment. Here again, Government indicates that in its attempt to relieve the pressure of inflation for the total population, a certain amount of "inconvenience" is inevitable. But the younger critics do not want to accept this excuse. Perhaps in the system of economics under which we live, a certain amount of unemployment is unavoidable and even necessary. But then, if we look at the problem from the point of view of these downtrodden, miserable, humiliated individuals who are thrown out of jobs, perhaps the whole system of economics should be overthrown! Perhaps all of society is rotten and corrupt if this is all it can do. Perhaps our form of Government that allows an involvement in Vietnam

which can revel in a death rate of 64 per week should be disbanded.

And the rebels, on their part, are indiscriminate in their rejection of society and its values. They fail to select the enduring values while they reject those that are damaging. They disdain work and productivity, science and technology. They take its advantages for granted, and uncritically condemn the whole philosophy that made these benefits possible.

Obviously, both are right and both are wrong, for both are necessary. Adamu alone leads to a hard, depersonalized view, and reduces men to cogs in a wheel. But adameh alone results in a society where there are no wheels in which we ought not to be cogs! It means that insofar as civilization is concerned we stagnate, and we must ultimately be defeated by Nature, by illness and storm and all else against which technology is a shield.

So both definitions or faces of Adam are needed, adamu and adameh.

However, these two are still insufficient. Even with material progress and viable personal relations, man must remain dissatisfied, unhappy, possessed of an inner vacuum.. With all this, he still lacks something transcendent, something holy, something beyond nature and beyond man -- something supernatural. With all his achievements, Adam today is haunted by the same question that confronted the first Adam: ayekah, 'where art thou?' Where are you going, what is the meaning of your life, what is the purpose of it all?

Adamu and adameh do still not exhaust the meaning of Adam.

For Judaism requires a third dimension, yielding three faces of Adam. It demands yet another facet to the totality of man's existence.

In a typical, characteristic flight of romantic, speculative philology, which usually has little bearing to the scientific facts, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch maintains that the name Adam derives from the Hebrew word hadom, which means the footstool. Thus, Isaiah says in the Name of God,

יְהוָה יִשְׁכֵּן בֵּין יְדֵי וְשֵׁי  
PINEO, 'KODI SHICDI PIRDO

"the Heavens are my throne and the Earth my footstool" (Is.66:1). Or David says, *לפניו עיניו כבודו יתברך*, "Bow down to His footstool, for He is holy" (Ps.99:5).

What does this mean? Man always wants to feel significant and needed, that what he does has meaning and purpose. Therefore Judaism tells us that every man must be a shaliach, a messenger or an ambassador. Each of us must feel that we are the hadom raglav, the footstool of God, that we carry out His mission, that what we do or are all lead to a higher, divine end. This is not a separate area of life, but an interpretation of the other two: Whether adamu or adameh, whether at office or at home, whether at factory or with family, I must seek to advance God's causes by acting as His hadom. As technical creator or as a human in relation with others, I must see myself as a footstool of the Lord. Only then can I be sure of avoiding the extremes of becoming hard, a mere producer; or soft, one who revels in ethereal relationships that have no objective worth or enduring value.

Perhaps that is what the Rabbis of Kabbalah meant when they said that ~~the Patriarchs became~~ *tzaddik must become* *האדם הטהור*, a chariot or vehicle for the Lord. The righteous man is one who puts his life at God's disposal, and carries out His causes. Not always do we know in advance what function has been assigned to us -- but the discovery and execution of that purpose, that is all of life.

No wonder that Dr. Viktor Frankl, in a great book which I have recommended before and hope still to recommend in the future, Man's Search for Meaning, maintains that psychologically and existentially man needs purpose and meaning in life as much as nourishment and sex and power. It is a fundamental dimension of his being. Man as hadom, as a mission-bearer, is God's ambassador, and it makes adamu bearable and adameh enduring.

When man explores the hadom aspects of his nature, he aspires to be more than human. But without it, he must perforce remain less than human. Man can be commercially and scientifically, domestically and socially, success-

ful if he only pursues the adamu quality of his life and enhances the adameh dimension; but he remains woefully inadequate if he is ultimately meaningless in all his actions.

So as a people and as individuals, we must recapitulate the story of the first Adam.

Like Adam, we must strive for adamu, to transform life into a Garden of Eden. Like Adam, we must attempt to be successful in adameh, in our personal relations, in fulfilling our humanity. But again like Adam, that little but powerful voice that unnerved him still pursues us: ayekah, where art thou, what meaning does your life have?

And the answer must be forthcoming without hesitation: I, an adam, am ready to become a hadom, a footstool of God, and place my life at His service.