

2/25/80

Commentary on beginning of Bereshit

When Adam calls his wife Chavvah, the reason given is that she is 'חַיָּה בְּלֵא . This has proven difficult to all commentators: after all, she may be the mother of Cain, or all living humans, but not all living beings? This has occasioned a number of sophisticated answers, none of them fully satisfactory.

I suggest that the word 'חַיָּה and חַיָּה have alternative meanings. Whereas the root in Hebrew means "life," in Aramaic it means, "speech." Thus, "to tell" in Aramaic is חַיָּה . Similarly, in Hebrew the root appears in the expression חַיָּה בְּלֵא , as in Job: חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא .

Adam was born with intellect, but before he had Eve he had no one to talk to. The animals with whom he dealt, were not capable of conversation. When Eve was created, he was able to talk with her, and he marvelled at her speech (volubility?). He noticed that the child Cain also spoke, in contradistinction to other animals. Therefore he called her חַיָּה because she was 'חַיָּה בְּלֵא , the mother of all conversing beings.

This explains the verse -- and also the common human prejudice that women are talkative ...

Handwritten notes in Hebrew:
... חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא ...
... חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא ...
... חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא ...
... חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא חַיָּה בְּלֵא ...