



The Hebrew is much broader and deeper. Adam shares the same root as *adama*, meaning “earth,” and *dam*, meaning “blood.” Rabbi Steven Greenberg suggests that a more accurate rendering of *adam* in English would probably be “earthling.”

*Chava* shares the same root as *chavaya*, meaning “experience.” But the way we normally mean experience—as in, “that was a good experience”—is, in Hebrew, *nisayon*. *Chavaya*, on the other hand, is, for example, “last week I climbed Half Dome”; *zot hayta memash chavaya*—it’s a *deep* experience. So what we have is not so much Ken and Barbie as “earthling” and “deep experience,” giving us a more archetypal rendering of two primordial beings.

Next, let’s look at the creation of Adam more closely. Genesis 1:27 reads:

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

First, we have a repetition: “And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him.” And then, we switch pronouns to “male and female He created them.” What do we make of this switch? Certainly one way to read this is that Adam, “earthling,” is androgynous: “male and female He created them.”

There’s further support for this view if we read how Eve is created from Adam’s *tsela*. This word is usually translated as “rib,” and we have this somewhat demeaning notion that primordial woman was created from primordial man by putting Adam to sleep and removing one of his ribs. It doesn’t really make any sense.

It makes a lot more sense if we use a different translation for *tsela*, in which *tsela* means “side,” as in *meshulash shve tsela’ot*, which means “an equilateral triangle.” So if we think of Eve as being created from a “side” of Adam, which is perfectly consistent with the Hebrew, we get a description in which Adam is originally created both male and female, but is split into two genders, and two people, with the creation of Chava.

Let’s return to our relationships and think about what this might be telling us. We have all heard such statements as “my better half,” “I feel whole with him,” “I’m only half a man without her.” These are usually said early in the relationship, before the power struggle blocks out some of the essential truth this choice of language betrays.

Like Adam, we are created in a state of primordial unity. Through the deep experiences of our early life—the *chavayot*, if you will, of gender identification, socialization, and a whole bunch of other things that are difficult to understand—we are split just like Adam and Chava.

We express a part of ourselves outwardly, and we leave a whole bunch dormant and unexpressed inwardly, much of it beyond our conscious awareness. When we partner with another, we are seeking to regain that sense of wholeness we lost when part of ourselves went underground. Our life's partner is that person we choose, with incredible pinpoint accuracy, to help us on this journey.

The goal of relationships is not happiness, but wholeness. If our primary goal is happiness, then the kind of compromise and sacrifice required by committed relationship is always going to disappoint us. If we look instead to the ways in which our partners help us toward wholeness, and we partner together in that endeavor, then we'll be happy. But happiness has to be the by-product, not the primary goal.

How do we help each other become whole? Let's turn once more to our *parasha* for insight. We have suffered from translations that are part interpretations because the literal Hebrew didn't make sense or was somehow offensive to the translator. When God says, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him," we are again given to understand that Chava is created to serve Adam, to be his "helper." The Hebrew, *ezer kenegdo*, translates literally, "helper as opposed to him." So rather than getting a submissive helper, Adam is given someone who will help him through her very difference, through her opposition to him. We can think of it as two opposing forces that balance each other and provide added strength, like opposite sides of an arch that supports a building.

It is a truism that we fall in love with someone for a particular quality, and then want to divorce them for it afterward. Or, as one authority put it, we hire our spouse to do something, and then we want to fire them for doing it. David marries Sara because she's down-to-earth and responsible, and he feels safe with her. Sara marries David because he's artistic, spontaneous, and fun to be with. A few years into their marriage, David can't stand Sara because she's always worried about money and squelches any opportunities for fun. Sara can't stand David because he's irresponsible, and she feels she has another child to raise along with their newborn baby.





In the Seven Days story, God gave humans no restrictions, while in the Eden story, God gave Adam and Eve one restriction: to not eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Seeing how Adam and Eve went against the single restriction they were given, we might well assume that wanting what we can't have is a part of human nature.

Why would God put such a restriction on Adam and Eve? It's possible that God cares about Adam and Eve and doesn't want them to get hurt. Much as parents won't permit their children to participate in dangerous activities, God might be trying to protect Adam and Eve by preventing them from eating the fruit. By putting that restriction on them, God's actions are suggesting a Parent-to-Child relationship.

On the other hand, God could be restricting Adam and Eve because God either doesn't trust them, or doesn't want them to be as knowledgeable as God. Both of these possibilities suggest a Ruler-to-Subject relationship, which puts God in a more authoritarian light.

The last relationship between God and humans to consider is that of Scientist to Rat. It is possible to imagine that the whole Eden circumstance was created simply because God wanted to see whether Adam and Eve would take the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Maybe God suspected Adam and Eve would do so from the start, but wanted to test it out anyway, like a scientist testing a hypothesis.

In any case, thinking about the Scientist-to-Rat relationship, one has to wonder about God's affection for humankind. Does the scientist care about the rat? Probably not. Does God care about humans? The answer to that is yes. Many prayers (including the V'ahavta) are God commanding, wanting, some might say begging us to love God. Looking back at the Parent-to-Child relationship, God loves us and wants what is good for humankind. So, God is similar to a scientist in some ways, such as conducting an experiment, while dissimilar in others, such as caring about the well-being of the parties to the experiment.

The trouble with seeing God as a scientist is that scientists are not all-mighty. One huge part of science and experimentation is finding out that your hypothesis was wrong. So this brings up the next question: Is God all-powerful? Could it be that God is almost completely powerful, but not necessarily all-powerful?

Many times, people have asked, “If there’s a God, why did the Holocaust happen?” When God created humans, God added a sort of uncontrollable aspect to our nature. It’s as if God made humans, then said, “All right, go do whatever you want, but if you mess up, it’s your fault.” God left us alone, and now, whatever terrible things some of us do, like the Holocaust, are our fault. Maybe, in creating us that way, God trusted us not to make ourselves extinct, sort of like God trusted Adam and Eve not to take the fruit in the Garden of Eden.

The last type of relationship in this thought process isn’t between God and humans, but is inside ourselves. This last relationship is the Me-to-Me relationship, because it involves an internal struggle within ourselves. This comes up when we ask, “Would I take the fruit as Eve did?” Yes, because wanting what we can’t have is part of human nature.

Looking at the two stories of creation, we have some new ways to think about Judaism, human nature, and the nature of God. Maybe God does things because God cares about us; God might truly love us as a parent loves a child. It’s also intriguing that such a big part of human nature is wanting what we can’t have. So, what does this all mean to us in our lives, now and in the future?

Thinking about God’s love for us, it feels special, to know that God cares about us and the Jewish people. In thinking about the mistakes made in the Garden of Eden, maybe in the future we can try to keep our expectations real, and understand when others, as well as ourselves, make mistakes.

And finally, it feels really good to be loved! Maybe God just wants to be loved, too. It works out nicely, because the feeling’s mutual!