

Which Adam? Which Eve?

In the opening two chapters of Genesis the reader finds two different accounts of the creation of humankind. What are we to make of these differences? Read the two accounts closely in Genesis chapters 1 & 2, preferably with a friend, and with a pencil or highlighter to underline and circle key words, ideas, repetitions and poetic elements that strike you as unusual or interesting.

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Gen. 1:27-28)

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (Gen. 2:21-22)

What do you notice as you compare the two stories of the creation of humankind? How would you describe the persona of Adam/Eve 1 compared to Adam/Eve 2?

Perhaps you noted that Adam 1 is characterized by a decisive commissioning to 'subdue' the earth. He, along with his female counterpart, is a man of action, productivity, initiative. He is *empowered* by God to call the shots, in control of himself and his environment. Adam 2, on the other hand, although given authority over the animals, is immediately led into an experience of sacrifice and surrender. He is *overpowered* by God as he succumbs to sleep and relinquishes part of his own body in the creation of woman. Do you agree with these observations? What else did you observe in the text? How might we explain or reconcile these different Adams/Eves?

If we were examining Genesis from an historical viewpoint we might suggest that the

two stories represent two distinct storytelling traditions preserved in the text. But let's set aside such theories here and hear instead from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, an esteemed Torah scholar of the 20th century, who interprets Genesis with a compelling synthesis of traditional biblical wisdom and modern religious anthropology.

According to Soloveitchik, in these Torah texts we see two kinds of instincts in the human person, both willed by God. God wants us to be both active *and* submissive, victory-bent *and* humble, disciplined *and* docile. Enshrined in our existence is a creative tension between self-expression and covenantal relationship; individuality and community. Thus Genesis reveals something of the mysterious, complex depths and paradoxes of the human person, setting humankind apart in the order of creation. •

Table topic: Integrating the diverse qualities of the two Adams is the great challenge of human and spiritual growth. Can you name somebody who exhibits this integration? Discuss the challenge that Genesis 1-2 poses in your life. Do you most resemble Adam/Eve 1 or 2?

Can you recognize the tension mentioned above in other biblical stories (e.g., the gospel story of Mary and Martha, Lk.10:38-42)?

Bibliography: Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1965). Scripture: *NRSV*.

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