



Parashat Bereishit

Why is Eve Created from Adam?

Dear Rebbetzin,

I have always wondered why Chava was created from Adam's rib, rather than Adam being created from Chava's rib. Why is woman created from man and not vice versa? Doesn't this seem to indicate that women are lower and secondary to men? I hope you can shed some light on this topic, Thank you very much,
Chava Adams (name changed)

Dear Chava,

I totally understand and identify with your concern that the creation story may be chauvinistic, seemingly making Chava and all subsequent women who were created from her into subordinate beings fashioned from a mere rib of man, without having their own independent existence.

Searching for the Other Half

It is interesting to note that whereas all the animals were created male and female independently, man and woman were originally one integrated being with two faces, as the Talmud explains based on *Bereishit* 1:27: "So G-d created the man in His own image, in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them." From this verse, we learn that the original Adam written in singular was one integrated being including his female aspect that later became separated into two beings, Adam and Chava as indicated from the change into plural (*Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin* 18a). Unlike the animals, for whom mating takes place with whoever is around, Hashem designated a particulate soulmate for every human being. We learn this from the fact that man and woman were originally part of one interconnected being. Whereas, there is no particular cow dedicated for a particular ox, humans are always searching for their other half (*Ohr Hachaim, Bereishit*).

The Mistranslated Rib

Adam and Chava were originally created together sharing one soul. It follows logically that the emergence of Chava from one joint double-sexed being was less a creation than a separation. Such a separation could hardly take place from a rib, but rather by separating the feminine side from the masculine, so that two independent beings would emerge. According to Rashi, the word צלע/tzela usually translated rib, actually means side. As in (*Shemot* 26:26) "The side of the tabernacle." The word צלע/tzela appears 40 times in the Tanach, where it refers to the side of a building, an altar or ark (*Shemot* 25:12; 26:20, 26; *I Kings* 6:34), a side-chamber (*I Kings* 6:8; *Yechezkiel* 41:6), or a branch of a mountain (*II Shemuel* 16:13). It was translated as "rib" only in the Adam and Chava context:

ספר בראשית פרק ב (כא-כב): וַיִּפֹּל הָאָדָם עַל הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעָתוֹ וַיִּסְגֹּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: (כב) וַיְבָרֶךְ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת הַצֵּלַע אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶל הָאָדָם:

"The Eternal G-d caused man to fall into a deep state of unconsciousness, and he slept. Then He took one of his [sides or ribs, 'tzela'] and closed up the place where it had been with flesh. And the Eternal G-d built the tzela that he had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (*Bereishit* 2:21-22).

From the Side of Equality

מדרש רבה בראשית - פרשה ח פסקה א (א) ...בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון דיו פרצופים בראו ונסרו ועשאו גביים גב לכאן וגב לכאן איתיבון ליה והכתיב ויקח אחת מצלעותיו אמר להון מתרין סטרוהי היך מה דאת אמר (שמות כו) ולצלע המשכן דמתרגמין ולסטר משכנא.

...When G-d created Adam, he created him androgynous, with two faces. Then they were split and two backs were made; a back for the male and a back for the female. They countered: "And he took one of his ribs (*tzal'ot*)"! He answered: [*Tzal'ot* does not mean ribs; rather it means] sides. As it says, "And to the side (*tzela*) of the Mishkan..." (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 8:1).

Thus Chava was originally one side of the entire human; Hashem simply cut her side off and made them two separate persons. Abarbanel explains 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. Woman was created to be "beside" man, not beneath or above him.

Additional Intuition

When we examine the well-known Midrash that women have more *binah* (intuition) than men do, it actually wouldn't make sense if woman was created from man's rib.

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה יח פסקה א (א) ויבן ה' אלהים את הצלע ר"א בשם רבי יוסי בן זמרא אמר ניתן בה בינה יותר מן האיש:

"G-d built the side (rib) Rabbi Eliezer in the name of Rabi Yossi son of Zimra said, "She was given more intuition (בינה) than man..." (*Midrash Bereishit Rabba* 18:1).

Had woman been created from man's rib, then it would have been necessary to build the complete human being from the small rib, and there would be no need to explain "G-d built the rib" to mean anything other than simple building. However, according to the midrash that man originally was created with two faces there is no need for building, it would have been enough to close the flesh. Therefore the midrash needs to explain the word "built" to refer to the extra *binah* with which women are endowed.

The Peak of Creation

Still, even if G-d created woman from man's side rather than from his rib, why wasn't man created from woman's side? Depending on how you look at it, being created from man doesn't necessarily make woman inferior. True, if woman emanates from man, it makes man feel more as a protector and defender of the women in his life, and woman naturally desires to return to become part of man and thus help him reach his ultimate perfection. Yet, I heard the following joke: After having created Adam, Hashem looked at him and told Himself, "I can do better than this!" Everything in creation progresses from inanimate to vegetative, to animate and then finally to human. Thus, in a way, we may say that the woman – who was created last – represents the most refined peak of creation.

Simple Separation

Women are associated with the home (*Babylonian Talmud, Yoma* 2a). The Hebrew word for home – בַּיִת/bayit also means the inside i.e. inner. Thus, we may deduct that man and masculinity represent the exterior reality while woman and femininity represent the inner realm. We usually name a thing after its external appearance and function, for example, an item may be defined as a curtain, rather than a woven cotton fabric. Therefore, when the Torah originally used the term 'Adam' to refer to the

two-faced androgynous being it was a general term that included both Adam and Chava. The term Adam was used since it represented its external aspect. Thus, woman was not created from man any more than man was created from woman; they were simply separated from one another. *Maor V'Shemesh* explains that man and woman originally were one being with two directions. The male part would raise up the lower and influence the highest worlds, whereas the female counterpart would receive all the good influences from above to below. Then they became divided.

May we all once again become unified, by finding our soulmates and truly return to become one!