

Androgynous Myth: The Creation of Adam and Eve in Peshat and Midrash

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I. Pesukim

1. Bereishit 1:26-28
2. Bereishit 5:1
3. Bereishit 2:8
4. Bereishit 2:21-24

II. Parshanim

1. Rashi Bereishit 1:27

(ג) זכר ונקבה ברא אותם. ולהלן הוא אומר וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצִּלְעֹתָיו וגו' (בראשית ב')? מִדְּרַשׁ אֲנִי שֶׁבְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁנֵי פְּרָצוּפִים בְּבְרִיאָה רְאשׁוֹנָה, וְאַחַר כֵּן חִלְקוּ. וּפְשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא, כָּאֵן הוֹדִיעָה שֶׁבְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּשֵׁשִׁי וְלֹא פִי' לָהּ פִּיצוּד בְּרִיטָן, וּפִרְשׁ לָהּ בְּמָקוֹם אַחֵר:

2. Rashbam, Ibid.

זכר ונקבה ברא אותם - כמו שמפרש לפנינו ויקח אחת מצלעותיו כלל ואח"כ פירש.

3. Radak, Ibid.

(ג) זכר ונקבה ברא אותם, זכר עם נקבה, ובפרשה אחרת יפרש איך ברא אתם זכר ונקבה:

III. The Midrashic Tradition

1. Bereishit Rabba 8:1

אמר רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אדם הראשון, אנדרוגינוס בראו, הדא הוא דכתיב (בראשית ה, ב): זכר ונקבה בראם. אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמן, בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אדם הראשון, דיו פרוצופים בראו, ונסרו ועשאו גבים, גב לכאן וגב לכאן. אתיבון ליה והכתיב (בראשית ב, כא): ויקח אחת מצלעותיו, אמר להון מתרין סטרוהי, היד מה דאת אמר (שמות כו, כ): ולצלע המשכן, דמתרגמינן ולסטר משכנא וגו'.

2. Berachot 61a

ויבן ה' אלקים את הצלע רב ושמואל חד אמר פרוצוף וחד אמר זנב

3. Dr. Malka Simkovich, thetorah.com/the-making-of-adam/

The fact that a careful and literal reading of Genesis can be made to support the surprising interpretations of R. Samuel ben Nahman and Resh Lakish that the first human was an androgynous being does not explain what motivated them to advance this interpretation. How did they think of this idea and why did it appeal to them? There are other, simpler ways to solve the contradiction. For example, Rashi, Rashbam and Radak all assume that Gen. 1:26-27 was meant as a general statement and that Gen. 2 fills the reader in with the details—a case of *klal ufrat*—a generality followed by a specific.

Plato's *Symposium* clarifies the Rabbis' exegetical motivation. The very same Greek word used in the Midrash by Samuel ben Nahman, *androgynos*, appears in Plato's *Symposium* (ca. 4th cent. BCE) and is spoken by Aristophanes, who is theorizing to his colleagues regarding the origin of humankind.

4. Plato, *The Symposium*

'Now indeed, O Eryximachus,' said Aristophanes. 'I must speak something different from what you and Pausanias said. For to me, humans completely misunderstand the dynamics of Eros [Love]; if they perceived Him, they would build the greatest temples and altars, and would make the greatest sacrifices, just as now none of these things happen for Him, although most assuredly it is fitting that they all happen. For of all the gods, He [Eros] is the philanthropist, being an ally to humanity, and a healer in those things needing healing, bringing the greatest happiness to the human race. Therefore, I shall try to initiate you into the mysteries of His dynamics, and you will become teachers of others.

First, you all will learn about the nature of humanity and its experiences. For long ago its nature was not as it is now - one became the other. For at first there were three species [or sexes] of humans, not two, just as now: male and female, as well as another third one [androgynae], sharing things in common with both of these (of which its name remains although it has disappeared). For the androgynae back then was distinct in shape and name, out of having in common both male and female, but now its name survives only in reproach...

After that, with their natures hewn in two, each one missed the union with its other half...

It is from that time that the innate Love [Eros] of humans for each other came to be, and draws us to that primeval nature, and as a consequence makes one out of two and heals humanity's nature.

5. Arrow Young Men Founding Legend, Coos Native American Tribe

Two young men were traveling... They stopped in the middle of their journey (and one of them said), "How would it be if we two should try it? What do you think about it?" "It would be good if we two should try it," answered the other one.

"We ought to try with that soot here."

They had five pieces (disks) of soot. Now they stopped and dropped one piece into the ocean. The world at that time was without land. Everything was covered in water....

The next day they dropped another disk. Then they stopped at some small place and dropped another small disk into the ocean. They looked at it from above. Now land began to appear, and they saw it. They were very glad when they saw the land coming up...

Early in the morning they went back to see the world they had created. Suddenly they saw tracks on the ocean beach. "Whose tracks may these be?" asked one of them.

They followed the tracks, and soon came upon a person sitting (on top of a snag).

"You, indeed, must have made those tracks. Who are you?"

"I am a medicine man," answered the person whose face was painted all over with red paint.

"You have no right to travel here. This is our world. We have made it. Are you surely a medicine man?"

They seized the stranger and killed him. Then they spilled his blood in all directions, and said to him, "You will be nothing. The last generation shall see you."

Then they turned back. Suddenly one of them became pregnant. The child could not come out. "What will become of us? We ought to have wives." None of them had done anything; nevertheless, he became pregnant. The child was trying all the time to come out but could not do it. So they sent some one to the north and told him, "There is a man living there. He is a good man. Bring him here..."

As soon as [the man from the north] saw the pregnant man, he took out the child. It was a girl. From this girl, all the people took their origin. She caused the people to multiply, and to inhabit the world."

6. Casey O'Higgins, "Two-Spirit Indigenous Americans: Fact not Fiction" (2015)

Creation stories such as "Arrow Young Men (Creation of the World)" cement the spiritual power and responsibility of Two-Spirit individuals... A Two-Spirit medicine man appearing as a powerful presence to promote the creation of the world promotes positive portrayals and depictions of Two Spirit Indigenous individuals in native communities.

7. Daniel Boyarin, Carnal Israel, pg. 36

One of the clearest arguments for rabbinic resistance to the surrounding discourse of the body is the Rabbis' citation of that discourse while significantly modifying its meaning. The myth of a primal androgyne was widespread in late antiquity, particularly among platonists in the Jewish (and eventually, Christian) traditions. This myth is cited in Genesis Rabba, the earliest midrash on the first book of the bible. The midrashic version is, however, significantly different from preceding and surrounding versions of the narrative.

8. Philo, Allegorical Commentary

After this he says that "God formed man by taking clay from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life" (Gen. ii.7). By this also he shows very clearly that there is a vast difference between the man thus formed and the man that came into existence earlier after the image of God: for the man so formed is an object of sense-perception, partaking already of such or such quality, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal; while he that was after the Image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible.