

God Created *Haadam*
The Basis of Equal Rights

Genesis 1:27; 2:15-22
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Opening Prayer

Holy One, be with us this morning as we think about familiar texts. Let us see them with new eyes; let us see them with your eyes! May your Spirit grant us new understanding, your understanding as we begin a new day! It is in your name that we pray, amen!

Reflection

Perhaps two of the most troubling misreadings in all of Scripture are those associated with the role of women and their relationship to men in the Creation narratives. Traditional readings of the King James Version, though quite faithful to the original Hebrew in many respects, obscure what appears to be the intended meaning of the initial Creation account (Gen 1:1-2:4a) in Genesis 1:27 and thus read:

1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

This translation makes it sound like "man" i.e. the male expression of the human species was created first and that this gendered individual was somehow superior to the other gender, the "female" referenced last in this passage. For this reason I have favored the translation:

1:27 So God created *haadam* or "humanity" in God's own image, in the image of God God created "it"; male and female God created them.

This translation takes the notion of a preferred or primarily gender away from this narrative and emphasizes that the point of the larger passage is that all of humanity (i.e. both genders) are created in God's image. Both genders are created equally in this narrative.

Similarly as we look at the narrative in Genesis 2:4bff., the story of the Creation in the Garden of Eden, the traditional interpretations have tended to suggest that "man" i.e. the male gendered entity was the first created. For example, the KJV also has in chapter 2:

2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him
2:18 It is not good that the man should be alone;

And while these are generally good translations of the Hebrew, I think a better reading would be that:

2:15 And YHWH God took the "human being" and put "it"
2:18 It is not good for the "human being" to be alone

These alternative renderings help clarify the intent of the resolution problem of the narrative about the solitary human being, for subsequently in verses 21-22, YHWH God does not take a "rib" from the "man" but a "side" of the "human being." In essence, YHWH God bifurcates the being, and it is only in verse 22 that the two sides are given the gendered designations *ishah* or "woman" and *ish* or "man." It is not that *haadam* was a "man" before, but that it was an undifferentiated genderless entity that only takes on the aspects of gender after the partnered

gender is created. This also clarifies the meaning of verse 24, which asserts that when the man and woman come back together in union, they again become "one flesh."

So as we look at both of these stories of Creation, it is striking to note that the Hebrew texts support the idea of God's creation of equal genders both fulfilling the promise and purpose of *haadam*. God's equal creation establishes a context wherein we should question the unequal valuation we have of women and men in this world.

-That men continue to receive greater compensation than women for doing the same jobs is not a problem with God's created order, it is a problem with our interpretation of it.

-That women had to fight for the right to vote, to work, to hold executive level positions is not a problem with God's created order, but a problem with our interpretation of it.

-That men continue to develop rules that curtail women's rights is not a problem with God's created order, but a problem with our interpretation of it.

-That we continue to treat human beings differently based on their different genders has much less to do with God and much more to do with our faulty interpretations of the stories of God's creation of humanity.

Perhaps if we could begin to see gender difference through the eyes of our gracious Creator, we might begin to see the injustice associated with unequal valuation and unequal attribution of human worth. May we come to see each other through God's eyes and, thus, learn to treat each other as equals!

Concluding Prayer

Holy One, may we come to see each other through your eyes! May we come to see each other as you made us, equal in promise and equal in purpose! May we come to see each other as equally worthy of all rights, privileges, and value that we would expect for ourselves! May we come to see each other through your eyes! It is in your name that we stand together; it is in your name that we march together; it is in your name that we work together to fashion a world where women's rights are deemed human rights fully worthy of respect and consideration. It is in your name that we pray! Amen!