



Jewish Congregation of Marco Island
A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

Focus on a question in the weekly portion

October 10, 2026



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה :

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: b'Reisheet

Consists of: Genesis 1:1-6:8

Sequence—

in Genesis: 1st of 12

in annual Torah cycle: 1st of 54



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Genesis 1:25-31

Context: *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the foundation of the Israelite people.*

Content: *The Creation account in the opening chapter of Genesis depicts humanity as the last thing to be made— the pinnacle of God's created work, formed to have dominion over the earth.*

1:25] - Having made many species of wild beasts; many species of cattle; and all the diverse species of creeping things of the earth, and seeing that they were good,

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ
 לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת
 כָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא
 אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב

1:26a] - God declared: “Let Us make human-kind in Our Own Image, in Our Own Likeness.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ
 בְּדְמוּתֵנוּ

1:26b] - “They shall have dominion over the fish of the sea; the birds of the sky; the cattle; the whole world, and all the creeping things swarming upon it.”

וַיִּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
 וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ
 הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ

1:27] - Whereupon God created humankind in the Divine Image, creating it in God's Own Image— creating them male and female.

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ
 בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר
 וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם

- more over

1:28] - And God blessed them, telling them: “Be fertile and increase, filling the earth and subduing it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and every crawling thing upon the earth.”

1:29] - Then God declared: “Behold that I have given you every seed-bearing plant upon all the earth, together with every tree that has seed-bearing fruit, all to be yours as food. [1:30a] - And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that crawls upon the ground— everything in which there is the breath of life— I have given all the green plants for food.”

1:30a] - So that is how it was— [1:31] - and God, seeing all that had been made, found it very good. Thus there had been an evening and a morning, The Sixth Day.

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם
אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ
וּכְבֹּשְׁתָּהּ וּרְדוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף
הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל
הָאָרֶץ

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת
כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל
הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְּרִי עֵץ
זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ וּלְכָל
חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל
רֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה
אֶת כָּל יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ

וַיְהִי כֵן וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי
בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי



נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם . . . וּיְרִדוּ
1:26 - Let Us make humankind . . . they shall have dominion

וַיְבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם
1:27 - Whereupon God created the human

בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ
creating it in God's Own Image—
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם
creating them male and female

Constancy in translation: אָדָם as taxonomy ≠ a personal name

“man / ανθρωπον / hominem / انسانا = Menschen / hombre / l'homme”

וַיֵּצֵר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה כָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֶת כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
A) Genesis 2:19 - Then The Eternal One, Who is God, formed out of the earth every kind of earthly creature and flyer-of-the-sky,

וַיָּבֵא אֶל הָאָדָם לִרְאוֹת מֶה יִקְרָא לוֹ
and then brought them all to the human, to see
ἤγαγεν αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸν Ἀδὰμ
adduxit ea ad Adam
which he would summon to himself.
what he would call it.

- continued



נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ

1:26 - Let Us make humankind in Our Own Image, in Our Own Likeness

B) Terence Hanbury “T.H.” White (1906-1964) *The Once and Future King* - “Well done,” exclaimed the Creator in delighted tones. “Here, all you embryos— come here, with your beaks and whatnots, to look upon **Our** first Man. He is the only one who has guessed **Our** riddle, out of all of you, and **We** have great pleasure in conferring upon him the Order of Dominion over the Fowls of the Air, and the Beasts of the Earth, and the Fishes of the Sea.

“Now let the rest of you get along, and love and multiply; for it is time to knock off for the week-end. As for you, Man, you will be a naked tool all your life, though a user of tools. You will look like an embryo till they bury you, but **all the others will be embryos before your might. Eternally undeveloped, you will always remain potential in Our image— able to see some of Our sorrows, and to feel some of Our joys.**

“**We** are partly sorry for you, Man, but partly hopeful. Run along then, and do your best. And listen, Man, before you go....”

“Well?” asked Adam, turning back from his dismissal.

“**We** were only going to say,” said God shyly, twisting **Their** hands together. “Well, **We** were just going to say, ‘God bless you’.”

C) Joseph Qimchi (1105-1170), *Seifer haB'rit* - The apostate declared: “The very first of the many Bible verses that are prophecies of Jesus (which you can neither contradict nor deny!) is written in the opening chapter of Genesis:

et ait faciamus hominem Let **Us** make humanity

The plural form of the verb clearly demonstrates the existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as do the plural possessives:

ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum in **Our Own** image
and **[Our]** likeness.

The “image” and “likeness” referred to are a human image and likeness, which clearly refers to **the divinity made flesh in Jesus**; that is irrefutable!”

D) Manasseh ben-Israel (Manoel Dias Soiero, 1604-1657), *The Conciliator* #6 -

Genesis 1:26 –

Then God said:

“Let **Us** make humankind

in **Our** Image,

in our **Own** Likeness.

Deuteronomy 32:29 –

See, now, that I— even I— **am the One**,
and that **there is no God besides Me.**

Isaiah 43:11 –

I, even I, am The Eternal One, and
besides Me there is no Savior.

Isaiah 45:18 –

I am The Eternal One; **there is none else.**

- more over

Rabbi Samuel Bar-Nachman says [Midrash Genesis Rabbah 8:8] that when Moses, in writing the Torah, came to this passage “Let Us make humankind,” he cried out: “O Sovereign of the universe, **why would You create an opportunity for heretics to err in respect to Your most fundamental Unity?**” To which The Eternal One replied: “Moses, write it down; who wishes to err, will err.”

The author of that text rightly foresaw that **this verse would lead many to err, by appearing to subdivide and diversify The First Cause**, Who [as described by Aristotle] is the only; sole; and most perfect Unity.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

ὁ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ
“the un-moved Mover”

primum movens
“The Prime Mover”

As Avicenna [the Persian philosopher-physician Abu ibn-Sina, 980-1037] said, such an erroneous opinion originates from those who hold that **two contrary effects** [such as dark and light, or heat and cold] **could not proceed from one single agent or cause**. Inasmuch as the moral concepts of good and evil constitute such a duality, [those in error] judge that **there must have been two causes or beginnings, from which each part of the duality respectively emanated**. Rabbi Leivi ben-Gershon [RaLBaG, Gersonides, 1288-1344]; Rabbi Joseph Albo [1388-1444, in his *Seifer Ha'ikarim*]; Rabbi Abraham Solomon [in his *N'vei-Shalom*, 1480]; and many others concurred with this concern.

Therefore [Rabbi Samuel Bar-Nachman in the aforementioned Midrash] imagined that Moses, fearing this verse might proliferate such a religious error, stayed his hand while writing down God's Torah. But then, on reflection, he continued writing based on the consideration that this fear was groundless— because he realized that **only those who wished to err would adduce this verse in substantiation of their own error**.

Rabbi Joel ibn Shu'aib, in his *'Olat Shabbat* [Aragon, c. 1475] and Rabbi Samuel Yafeh, in his *Y'fei-To'ar* [1480], rightly remarked on this. And their reason is clear[, based on the argument in Midrash Genesis Rabbah 8:9— namely] because the immediately subsequent verse reads

whereupon God **created** humankind **וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים**

using the singular form of the verb [to describe action of the seemingly plural subject *Elohim*], and **not the plural verb וַיִּבְרְאוּ** “**they** created,” [a form which manifests nowhere in Scripture].

What reason, therefore, for God to speak in the first-person plural and say “Let Us make?” Many in Israel have addressed this question.

1) Rabbi Joshua says [Midrash Genesis Rabbah 18:3] that **the Creator was consulting with the fabric of heaven and earth**.

This is a very proper answer to the question, because— in the same manner that a great king, possessing supreme authority and absolute power— often condescends to consult with his subjects, testifying thereby to the affection and

Joseph Qimchi, *Seifer haB'rit* -

At the beginning of creation, God created the four elements: the higher, **fire** and air; and the lower, **earth** and **water**. To these God had given **the faculty to produce all creatures by virtue of their natural qualities**. That is why it is written “let the earth sprout vegetation” [Genesis 1:11] and “let the earth bring forth swarms of creatures” [*ibid.* 1:20]. Thus it was until The Sixth Day, when **God created humanity in partnership with the four elements** saying: “let **us** make humankind.” It is **in their nature to produce a body which is material in character**, but it is the Creator Who breathed into it the supernal soul possessing intellect and rational wisdom.

respect he bears his vassals, so too did the King over kings, on resolving to create this noble creature called Humankind, **make those worlds which He had called into being privy to His intent.**

(RaSHI, drawing on this tradition, added to it that God teaches herein humility as the queen of human virtues, in thus urging us to hold counsel with our subordinates).

2) The kabbalists, expressing the esoteric significance of Scriptural text, point out in the Zohar [1:22b] that for all the other works of Creation, describing every other created thing, the Torah uses the singular (“let light be”; “let a firmament be”; “let the earth bring forth”; and so forth)—but that, when it comes to the subject of forming humankind, it says “let **us** make,” in the plural. This signifies, **as Plato also said** [in his creation manifesto *Timaeus*], that **The Eternal One addressed Secondary Causes**, to which He said: “I have yet to make an ensouled creature with a nature approaching to an equality with immortals; yet, **were it to be made directly by Me, it would be entirely divine.** Therefore, let the body be furnished by **you**, and **I** will provide the other portion, which is the soul.”

Rabbi Moshe al-Shech [of Tz’fat (1508-1593) in his *Torat Moshe*] came to the same conclusion, saying: “**God was addressing the Four Worlds** alluded to by kabbalists— for we mortals are composed of body and three powers of the soul, corresponding to the worlds

- of emanation [אצילות *Atzilut*];
- of formation [יצירה *Y’tzirah*];
- of creation [בריאה *B’ri’ah*]; and
- of production [עשיה *‘Asiyah*];

So, as a result, **God said in the plural ‘let **us** make,’ that each might contribute its respective part.**”

Rabbi Isaac Aramah [of Zamora, Spain (1420-1494) in his *‘Aqedat Yitzchak*] said: “In order to unify worlds so distinct and disparate, **it was proper that there should be but a single portion taken from each of them, that each should connect them together.**”

So it is that all these [mystically oriented] authors hold that The Eternal One— being sole and unique— **spoke in the plural sense to involve the Secondary Causes.**

3) The learned ibn-Ezra maintains that **The Eternal One addressed the celestial hosts**, saying: “**I**, with **you**, will make them.” Therefore, mortals became on a par with the celestials. **For they have an affinity to matter:** looking downwards from On High, they apply themselves to move the orbs, **and yet are spiritual beings**, and in raising themselves upwards they move (as Aristotle said) for a much higher and more exalted purpose, which is towards God.

Thus said Rabbi Sh’muEil bar Nachman [in Midrash Genesis Rabbah 8]: “**Humanity was created of two opposite natures**, namely body and soul. With the body he is drawn downward, and by the soul he elevates himself.” That same dualistic meaning is adopted by Gersonides [Levi ben-Gershon of France, 1288-1344] and Don Isaac Abravanel [of Lisbon and Venice 1437-1508] in their commentaries on Genesis.

Rabbi Judah haLevi [of Toledo, 1075-1141, in his *Kitab al-Kuzari*] also says that God spoke with **the angels, who were accustomed to manifest before the prophets in human shape.** The theologians call them Μετατόν *Metatron* [“behind the Throne”], האיש העליון “Higher Man.”

As these noble creatures approach nearer to **The First Cause**, mortal humans are, as a result, in some measure resemble them— and in this sense are made “in the image and likeness of God.”

4) Nachmanides [RaMBaN Bonastruc da Porta of Gerona, 1194-1270], citing Joseph Qimchi [1105-1170 of Narbonne], says that **God was addressing the earth and elements**.

He adduces, in favor of his opinion, that on The Sixth Day the Creator had ordered the earth to produce animals. Thus— when it came to forming humanity later that same Day— God addressed it in the plural “**let us** make,” so the earth gave the clay and dust of which the body of humanity was made, while God inspired them with a soul.

5) Rabbi Joshua of Sakhnin [4th century] holds that **The Eternal One consulted with the souls**, by which (in my opinion) he intended to say that as souls had already been created on the first day (this being the impression entertained by the Hebrews) **God would not precipitate them into latent matter** in a forcible— and, to them, involuntary— manner, **without their consent**. Thus it was with them that God spoke, saying: “**let us** make,” which is to say “**let us, together, form human beings**.”

6) Rabbi Saadia Gaon [of Baghdad 882-942] understands that the use of the first-person plural here is **merely a textual convention**. It does not denote any plurality, but rather **a royal usage**, such as when a sovereign says “We, the king...,” although it is he, alone, who speaks. Along those lines, Rabbi Ammi [in Midrash Genesis Rabbah] says that **God was consulting with Himself**, speaking not to any external entity but rather commenting internally “let **Us** make”— which is, by all means, an appropriately regal form of address.

We might say, therefore, that— as the greatest consideration and care is sought to be employed when making anything recognized as superior— Scripture therefore uses this special mode of regal speech regarding the creation of humanity, as **by saying in the plural “let Us make” it demonstrates a species of self-command and preparation for the execution of a special work**. The Eternal One thereby intended to show that every other thing created had been formed solely for the benefit and advantage of humanity.

In whatever manner it may be assumed that God spoke— whether with **Secondary Causes**; with **spiritual beings**; with **the elements**; or with the souls, or whether it was only a royal figure of speech showing self-preparation— this seeming contradiction in our text is now reconciled. **For it does not follow** from saying “let **us** make” **that there is therein any multiplication in The First Cause**, Who, Alone, is the sole and most fundamental Unity.

Therefore, Moses could without reservation proceed to write it down— for only one who premeditatedly and intentionally wished to err will adduce this text to substantiate his errors. (Although, in order precisely to obviate such excuses, the Septuagint translated this verb in the singular: “ποιήσωμεν **I** will make [humanity]”).

א"ר סימון בשעה שבא הקב"ה לבראת את אדם הראשון נעשו מלאכי השרת
כיתים כיתים וחבורות חבורות

E) Midrash Genesis Rabbah 8:5 - Rabbi Simon said: When The Holy And Blessed One

- continued

resolved initially to create Humanity, the ministering angels divided into opposing teams and contentious factions.

מהם אומרים אל יברא ומהם אומרים יברא ה"ד חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלוש נשקו

Some of them were saying: "Let them not be created," and some of them were saying: "Let them be created." This is even as written in Scripture: "Kindness and truth met; righteousness and peace touched" [Psalm 85:11].

חסד אומר יברא שהוא גומל חסדים

Kindness said: "Let them be created, as they perform acts of kindness,"

ואמת אומר אל יברא שכולו שקרים

while Truth said: "Let them not be created, as they are all full of lies."

צדק אומר יברא שהוא עושה צדקות

Righteousness said: "Let them be created, as they perform acts of righteousness,"

שלוש אומר אל יברא דכוליה קטטה

while Peace said: "Let them not be created, as they are all full of discord."

מה עשה הקב"ה נטל אמת והשליכו לארץ ה"ד ותשלך אמת ארצה אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה רבון העולמים מה אתה מבזה תכסיס אלטיכסייה שלך תעלה אמת מן הארץ הדא הוא דכתיב אמת מארץ תצמח

What did The Holy and Blessed One do? Took Truth and cast it down to earth. (Even as it is written in Scripture: "You cast truth earthward" [Daniel 8:12]). The ministering angels said before The Holy And Blessed One: "Master of the universe, why are You demeaning truth, which is Your very seal? Let Truth ascend from the earth (even as it is written in Scripture: 'Truth will spring from the earth'!)" [Psalms 85:12]).

ר' הונא רבה של צפורין אמר עד שמלאכי השרת מדיינין אלו עם אלו ומתעסקין אלו עם אלו בראו הקב"ה

Rav Huna, the rabbi of Tzipori [early 3rd century], says that while the ministering angels were busy deliberating together, and arguing among themselves, The Holy And Blessed One went ahead and created humanity...

אמר להן מה אתם מדיינין כבר נעשה אדם

and then informed them: "What are you arguing about? Humanity has been brought into being."