

Fill Your Own Cup – Year Two *Championing Life*

1) Genesis 1:26-30

26) And God said, "Let us make the human in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." 27) And God created the human in God's image, in the image of God, God created him; male through female God created them. 28) God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth." 29) God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. 30) And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, all the green plants for food." And it was so.

בראשית פרק א פסוק כו – ל

כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ; וְיִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ, וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ, הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ.
וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:
וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִּשְׁוּהָ וּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַי הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב יָזָרע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִי-עֵץ זָרַע וְרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ:
וּלְכָל-חַי הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל רֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ גִּפְשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי כֵן:

2) Mishna Tractate Sanhedrin 4:5

(5) How do we press the witnesses in a capital case?
We bring them in [to the court's chambers] and press them: "Perhaps what you say [isn't eyewitness testimony] is but your own assessment, or from rumors, or your witnessing an actual witness testify, or your reporting what a trustworthy said. Or perhaps you were unaware that by the end we'd interrogate you, with examination and inquiry.
Know that capital cases are not like monetary ones. In monetary cases, [a false witness] can return the money and achieve atonement. But in capital cases, the blood of [the victim [and all his future offspring hang upon you until the end of time. For thus we find in regard to Cain, who killed his brother, "The bloods of your brother cry out!" (Genesis 4:10) - the verse does not say blood of your brother, but bloods of your brother, because it was his blood and also the blood of his future offspring [crying out]!...
"It was for this reason that the human was first created as one person [Adam], to teach you that anyone who destroys a life is considered by Scripture to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world."
And also, to promote peace among the creations, that no man would say to his friend, "My ancestors are greater than yours."
And also, so that heretics will not say, "there are many rulers up in Heaven."
And also, to express the grandeur of The Holy Blessed One: For a person strikes many coins from the same stamp, and all the coins are alike. But the King, the King of Kings, The Holy Blessed One strikes every person from the stamp of the First person, and yet person is quite like his friend. Therefore, every person must say, "For my sake the world was created."...

משנה סנהדרין ד':ה'

(ה) כיצד מאימין (את העדים) על עדי נפשות. היו מכניסין אותן ומאימין עליהן. שמה תאמרו מאמד, ומשמועה, עד מפי עד, ומפי אדם נאמן שמענו, או שמה אי אתם יודעין שסופנו לבדוק אתכם בדרישה ובחקירה. הו יודעין שלא כדיני ממונות דיני נפשות. דיני ממונות, אדם נותן ממון ומתכפר לו. דיני נפשות, דמו ודם זרעיותיו תלוין בו עד סוף העולם, שכן מצינו בקין שהרג את אחיו, שנאמר (בראשית ד, י) דמי אחיך צעקים, אינו אומר דם אחיך אלא דמי אחיך, דמו ודם זרעיותיו. דבר אחר, דמי אחיך, שהיה דמו משלך על העצים ועל האבנים. לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי, ללמדך, שכל המאבד נפש אחת (מישראל), מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו אבד עולם מלא. וכל המקים נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו קים עולם מלא. ומפני שלום הבריות, שלא יאמר אדם לחברו, אבא גדול מאביך. ושלא יהו מינין אומרים, הרבה רשויות בשמים. ולהגיד גדלתו שלהקדוש ברוך הוא, שאדם טובע כמה מטבעות בחותם אחד וכלן דומין זה לזה, ומלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא טבע כל אדם בחותמו שלאדם הראשון, ואין אחד מהן דומה לחברו. לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר, בשבילי נברא העולם...

3) Elie Wiesel, Messengers of God, pp. 40-41

What does Adam represent for us, today? True, his destiny is unique, but that is true for every one of us. Every man must believe that his every deed involves all other men. Whoever kills, kills Adam. Whoever kills, kills Adam's vision, kills in Adam's name. Every man should be Adam to all others. That is the lesson learned-or to be learned-from his adventure.

Nor is it the only one. Expelled from paradise, Adam and Eve did not give in to resignation. In the face of death they decided to fight by giving life, by conferring a meaning on life. After the fall they began to work, to strive for a future marked by man. Their children would die - never mind! One moment of life contains eternity, one moment of life is worth eternity.

Here again Adam differs from most other mythological figures. Though defeated by God, he did not wallow in self-denial. He had the courage to get up and begin anew. He understood that though man is doomed from the start, he can and must act freely when planning his future. Such is the essence of Jewish tradition. Despite his fall, Adam died undaunted. As long as he lived, even far from paradise, even far from God, victory belonged not to death but to him.

According to Jewish tradition, creation did not end with man, it began with him. When He created man, God gave him a secret-and that secret was not how to begin but how to begin again.

4) Rachel Goldberg Polin, Limping Toward the Light, Times of Israel

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/limping-toward-the-light-a-letter-from-me-in-this-moment/>

The Jewish people are at a juncture where we have so very much to figure out. The nugget of wisdom my mother taught me when I was young keeps nudging at my hip, with its hands raised, wanting to be picked up, asking for attention. Her friend Danny shared the idea that if we always treat the person next to us as if they are the Messiah, in disguise as a regular person, we will be careful with how we speak and what we do in their presence. And if they choose not to reveal themselves in our lifetime, it will not matter, because we will have behaved respectfully and carefully to that regular person next to us. This is the most decent thing we can do in this complex and loud world piled with confusion and brokenness. Let us work on the lost art of respectfulness.

Hersh and I spoke about this idea often. We talked about how wearing a kippah is a way to show we believe there is something above us, watching us. I asked him just a couple of years ago what person he would imagine was watching him, from a window above, who would cause him to behave in an improved way. Even after all these long years, he said, Mrs. Carlton, his beloved first-grade teacher from Virginia. We talked about that feeling of having someone or something we respect above us, how we behave differently. We behave better.

We seem to have lost this ability as a people. There is so much internal disagreement and strife in our Jewish world, and it has not served us well. I think our challenge as we limp forward toward the light, as we rise from the ashes that are still smoldering (and our cherished 101 hostages in Gaza, still languishing there as of this writing) is relearning how to listen. We have to master how to give space and oxygen, allow the person with whom we disagree to share their ideas, and try to understand them. And then they too should allow me to do that. Is it possible? Yes.

Will it happen? **As I have said since October 7, 2023, hope is still mandatory. And so of course I hope and pray we use all of our creative and godly resources to succeed. We must.**

May we all know better days, and may we find true and restorative comfort. Imminently.