

Soulmates or Stalemates?

Genesis, Chapter 1

26. And G-d said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

27. And G-d created man in His image; in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis, Chapter 2

18. And the L-rd G-d said, "It is not good that man is alone; I shall make him a helpmate opposite him."

19. And the L-rd G-d formed from the earth every beast of the field and every fowl of the heavens, and He brought [it] to man to see what he would call it, and whatever the man called each living thing, that was its name.

20. And man named all the cattle and the fowl of the heavens and all the beasts of the field, but for man, he did not find a helpmate opposite him.

22. And the L-rd G-d built the side that He had taken from man into a woman, and He brought her to man.

23. And man said, "This time, it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called *ishah* (woman) because this one was taken from *ish* (man)."

24. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Male and female He created them

Rashi

First we read "male and female He created them," but later we read that G-d took one of man's ribs and used it to create woman. The Midrash explains that the first creation of humanity encompassed a creation with two faces, a masculine and a feminine one. Afterward, He divided them into two distinct genders.

Chizkuni

If G-d desired mankind to be comprised of both male and female, why did He not create them that way in the first place, as He did with the other animals?

To draw our attention to the precious nature of the partnership between man and woman, and to teach us that it is not good for man



פרק א

כו. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְבְהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ: כז. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

פרק ב

יח. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הָיְתָה הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: יט. וַיִּצַּר ה' אֱלֹהִים מִן הָאָדָמָה כָּל חֵית הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל הָאָדָם לְרֵאוֹת מַה יִּקְרָא לוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ: כ. וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל הַבְּהֵמָה וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חֵית הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא מָצָא עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: כב. וַיִּבֶן ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּבְאֶהָ אֶל הָאָדָם: כג. וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפַּעַם עֲצָם מֵעֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ זֹאת: כד. עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

to be alone. For this reason, the Holy One, blessed be He, willed that man should be without woman for a brief period of time, and then afterwards introduced her to him. In this way she would be especially dear to him since he had felt something was lacking without her.

Nachmanides 2:20

G-d did not take a part of Adam until he himself realized that there was no partner for him from among the created beings. In this way, Adam would develop a stronger desire for a helpmate.

Yevamot 63a: A helpmate opposite him

If he is worthy, she is a help to him; if he is not, she opposes him. Rabbi Yossei encountered Elijah the Prophet, and asked him: It is written, "I will make him a helpmate"; in what does a woman help a man? Said he to him: A man brings home wheat, does he chew wheat? He brings home flax, does he wear flax? Does she not then light up his eyes and set him on his feet?

Nachmanides 2:24

In the animal kingdom, the male animals do not cleave to the female animals, but rather the males come to any female that they find to procreate. The Torah is underlining a distinction here between humanity and other creations. The first female was necessarily an actual part of man's own flesh, which makes him want to cleave to her and always be with her. This is instilled in the nature of man that a son leaves his father and mother to build a life with his wife, whom he regards as the closest one to him, as though he and she are one flesh.

SUMMARY

- Women's most common complaint to their husbands: "You take me for granted."
- Men's most common complaint to their wives: "You don't stop criticizing me."
- With all other species, male and female were created at once. Adam was created a lone being.
- Man's intense loneliness was meant to impress upon him that his life is incomplete without his other half.
- Woman is called "Ezer Kinegdo," a helper, opposite him.
- Formed from part of man's own flesh, woman is closest to him, understands him and can build him up to help him.
- Women often seek love and connection. Men often seek respect and appreciation.

