

## Genesis Rabbah 8:5

R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, "Let him be created," while others urged, "Let him not be created." Thus it is written, *Love and Truth fought [each other], Righteousness and Peace armed [themselves against each other]* (Ps. 85:11).

Love said, "Let him be created, because he will dispense acts of love"; Truth said, "Let him not be created, because he is compounded of falsehood"; Righteousness said, "Let him be created, because he will perform righteous deeds"; Peace said, "Let him not be created, because he is full of strife."

What did the Lord do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Sovereign of the Universe! Why do You despise your seal? (Truth is the seal of God.) Let Truth arise from the earth!" Hence it is written, *Let truth spring up from the earth* (ib. 12).

All our Rabbis say the following in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah say it in the name of R. Simon: *Me'od* ("very") is identical with Adam; as it is written, *And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very (me'od) good* (Gen. 1:31), i.e. "and behold Adam was good."

R. Huna the Elder of Sepphoris said: While the ministering angels were arguing with each other and disputing with each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, created him. Said He to them: "What can you do? Man has already been made!"

## **Genesis Rabbah 8:5** Text Analysis (519 words)

Genesis 1:26 states, *And God said, "Let us make man 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."* The first part of the verse, in which God apparently consults with another entity or entities with regard to creating humanity, stands in contrast to previous acts of creation in which God either autonomously creates (Gn. 1:3 *God said "Let there be light" and there was light*) or God creates through already existing forms (Gn. 1:24 *God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature"*). If the Jewish God depicted in the Torah is singular, omnipotent and without peer, then with whom would God consult regarding the creation of humanity? This is the difficulty addressed in Genesis Rabbah 8:5.

The midrash begins with Rabbi Simon's story of the angels, who have divided into camps advocating for or against the creation of humanity. The prooftext from Psalm 85:11, the context of which describes God's generosity upon those who "fear" God, sets up the midrash to assign the angels to different attributes of God's generosity as specified in Psalm 85:11 - Love, Truth, Righteousness and Peace. The way in which each attribute is credited to humanity's future behavior - positive or negative - comes from the midrash's particular interpretation of "meet" as "fought," and "kiss" as "taking arms." Thus, Love and Righteousness advocate for humanity's creation while Truth and Peace advocate against the creation of humanity.

In response, God initially discards Truth (perhaps because God has already decided to create humanity and refuses to hear contrary opinions?) but then, upon the recommendation of the other angels, reinstates Truth to its prior status. This incident reflects and explains the contradictory position of Truth in Psalm 85:11 and 85:12.

The midrash then shifts its emphasis to a description of humanity as *me'od*. *Me'od* means "very," and comes from Genesis 1:31, *And God saw everything that He had made, and, Behold, it was very good*. The midrash, with great imagination, plays on the three Hebrew letters common to "Adam" and "very." This comparison seems especially fanciful given that the letters appear in a different order in each word. The application of "very good" to Adam (humanity) sets up the midrash for its conclusion, in which God goes ahead and autonomously creates humanity while the angels continue to argue with each other. The midrash seems to convey the message that while God may consult with other entities, the ultimate power and authority of creation (and all else in the world?) rests solely with God. Of course, it helps that via the previously mentioned wordplay, humanity is seen as a worthwhile creation in God's eyes. God's final comment to the angels reinforces the angels' lack of power.

Genesis 1:26, when translated through the midrash should read, "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, but do not believe that your involvement in an act of creation raises you to My level of authority and power.'"