

## RECREATING GOD

### A Devotional Meditation on Bereisheet (In the Beginning)

Genesis 1:1-6:8; Isaiah 42:5-43:10, 55:6-9; Acts 17:22-34; Romans 1:18-32

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We have such a small capacity for comprehending our environment when we come into this world. Ideally, our parents are the primary people in our lives from the beginning, and our perception of the world starts with them. As infants, we can't possibly take in all aspects of who they are. Therefore, we begin with the portions of themselves that they reveal to us, which hopefully is the nurturing, loving aspect of two people who very much desire to have us in their lives. That's why they meet our every need, put up with our messy, noisy ways, go to all lengths to keep us healthy, and shield us from influences we are not ready to handle properly.

That's how it was with my parents. As I grew older, they provided further revelation of themselves in accordance with my ability to comprehend that revelation and use it to shape my own identity. My father, for example, created an image of himself that my young mind could process. He added depth to that image as I grew older. Initially he was the authority figure who supported my mother in my daily care. Later, he was the man who helped me discover the world around me and modeled how a man should conduct himself. He wasn't always there physically, but his presence was with me. Later, I learned that his absences during the day happened because he went to work to make the living that supplied all our needs. Still later, I learned that he held at bay the creditors, criminals, and horrendous developments of the age that would consume me if left unchecked. Then I learned he was my biggest fan, even when he had to discipline me, and that he pushed me to excel because he wanted me to reach greater heights than he had attained.

All of that was necessary for my father because he didn't have much of that in his childhood. It might have been different if his mother hadn't died when he was a toddler, and if the Great Depression hadn't compelled his father to send him away to his uncle's farm, and then, when he was of age, send him away to military school. My father hardly had a chance to realize that there was a safe place from the chaos of this broken world when that chaos broke in upon him. That's why he determined his home would be different.

But first, my father had to create an image of himself to project before his children, just like our Heavenly Father did when He made this world.

That's one way to look at the peculiar grammar in the Hebrew phrase, "*B'reisheet bara Elohim et hashamayim v'et haaretz.*" The standard English translation is, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." A grammatically correct translation,



*Awakening Newborn Stars. NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, December 29, 2020. Image Credit: NASA, ESA, the Hubble Heritage (STScI/AURA)/Hubble-Europe (ESA) Collaboration, D. Padgett (GSFC), T. Megeath (U. of Toledo), and B. Reipurth (U. of Hawaii), [via Flickr](#).*

according to my friend David Nekrutman, is “In the beginning [He] created *Elohim*.” That leaves us with an even more peculiar, and potentially disturbing, idea: that God created *Elohim*, or, in other words, God created God.

Jewish commentary over the ages has come up with some excellent explanations for the unusual Hebrew grammar. That’s worthy of a separate study, but for now let’s consider something my friend David says:

At face value, how can God create *Elohim*? To avoid a potential heresy, **we must add brackets to:** “In the beginning [He] created *Elohim*.” The result is: “**In the beginning, He** [the Absolute, Unknowable, and Unnamable God] **created** [the idea of knowing Him through the name of] *Elohim*.” The bracketed content discloses God’s greater purpose. Humanity cannot fully know an infinite God. Through His gracious discernment, God created the idea of Himself through the name of *Elohim* to enable humanity to comprehend Him on an elementary level.\*

This is the Creator Who decided to establish a place where He could interact with sentient beings He made in His own image. He didn’t create them with the maturity they would have after a lengthy period of growth and development, but with just enough to comprehend their immediate surroundings and begin that process of development. Being hybrid creatures of spirit and matter, they had no capacity to withstand the full revelation of the Great Spirit Who had made them and breathed life into them. Neither could they comprehend the chaos He had pushed back to establish the place where they would live and grow. Therefore, in creating them and their environment, He had to create an image of Himself that they could receive and to which they could relate. The infinite became finite, and humankind basked in the reality He had made for them.

For a short while, that is. It didn’t take long for our first ancestors to be curious about the restrictions on their personal sovereignty. Like a petulant toddler who insists on climbing out of his crib and exploring the house alone, they chose to exceed the boundaries erected for their protection. It began innocently enough, even with good intentions, but it ended in disaster. Being unsatisfied with the image of God revealed to them, they sought to remake God in their own image and redefine their reality. What they actually did was redefine the order God had established by reintroducing the chaos He had pushed back for their sakes. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image in the form of mortal man. In time, their choice filled the earth with senseless violence and baseless hatred, and with offspring who have searched for the true God, if perhaps they might grope around for Him and find Him – even though He is not far from each one of us.

We must keep searching for Him. That’s what He advises:

Seek *ADONAI* while He may be found, call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous one his thoughts, let him return to *ADONAI*, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

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\* David R. Nekrutman, [Your Sabbath Invitation: A Partnership in God’s Ultimate Celebration](#) (Israel: David R. Nekrutman, 2021), 140-141.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.” It is a declaration of *ADONAI*. “For as the heavens are higher than earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:6-9 TLV

We search for Him so we may reconnect with Him as He reveals Himself, not as we want Him to reveal Himself. Where it gets especially precarious is when His revelation comes at different times and in different measure to different people. Those with greater revelation have greater responsibility to conduct themselves as instruments of His peace, not as stand-ins or substitutes for Him, and most definitely not as gatekeepers deciding who may have access to His Presence. That’s probably one of the reasons the world’s first siblings got into a deadly argument. If Cain had rejoiced that his younger brother had entered a new phase of relationship with the Creator instead of jealously insisting that he be the first in God’s esteem, then redemption might have overtaken chaos in the youth of the world.

Nearly six millennia later, we are still awaiting the final redemption that will reestablish that safe place and push back the cosmic chaos currently engulfing us. We could say we have the advantage of the Word of God, but our first ancestors had enough of that word for their time. We could say also that we have the revelation of God become flesh to save us, but our first ancestors walked in paradise with Him. Perhaps, then, if we have an advantage, it is in the generations of wisdom gained through the experience of departing from our God and His Word. That’s an advantage only when we cease recreating God in our image, and start relating to the form of Himself He has revealed from the beginning.