

Genesis 1:26-27

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדּוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה
וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

And God said, “Let us make humankind 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.”

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

And God created humankind in the divine image,
creating it in the image of God— creating them male and female.

Sanhedrin 38b:14, Grammatical Problem

Rabbi Yoḥanan says: Any place in the Bible from **where the heretics** attempt to **prove their heresy**, i.e., that there is more than one god, **the response to their claim is alongside them**, i.e., in the immediate vicinity of the verses they cite. The verse states that God said: “**Let us make man in our image**” (Genesis 1:26), employing the plural, **but it then states: “And God created man in His image**” (Genesis 1:27), employing the singular. The verse states that God said: “**Come, let us go down and there confound their language**” (Genesis 11:7),* but it also states: “**And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower**” (Genesis 11:5).* The verse states in the plural: “**There God was revealed [niglu] (pl. form) to him** when he fled from the face of his brother” (Genesis 35:7),** but it also states in the singular: “**To God Who answers [haoneh](sing. form) me in the day of my distress**” (Genesis 35:3).**

- *parashat Noah, Tower of Babel
- ** parashat Vayishlach, Jacob meeting Esau

Sanhedrin 38b, Ethical Problem

When the Holy One blessed be He, came to create man, He created a group of ministering angels and asked them, “Do you agree that we should make man in our image?” They replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?” God showed them the history of mankind. The angels replied (Ps. 8:5), “What is man that You are mindful of him?” [in other words, let man not be created]. God destroyed the angels. He created a second group, and asked them the same question, and they gave the same answer. God destroyed them. He created a third group of angels, and they replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, the first and second group of angels told You not to create man, and it did not avail them. You did not listen. What then can we say but this: The universe is Yours. Do with it as You wish.”

(Judaism's Life-Changing Ideas, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, p.4)

Sanhedrin 38b, God's Answer following Creation of the human being

When history arrived at the time of the people of the generation of the flood and the people of the generation of the dispersion, i.e., the Tower of Babel, whose actions were ruinous, the angels said before God: Master of the Universe, didn't the first set of angels speak appropriately before You, that human beings are not worthy of having been created? God said to them concerning humanity: "Even to old age I will not change; and even to grey hair, I will still be patient; I have made and I will bear; and I will carry, and I will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4)

Rashi 11th c, Grammar and Character

נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם **WE** WILL MAKE MAN — Although they did not assist Him in forming him (the man) and although this use of the plural may give the heretics an occasion to rebel (i. e. to argue in favour of their own views), yet the verse does not refrain from teaching proper conduct and the virtue of humbleness, namely, that the greater should consult, and take permission from the smaller; for had it been written, "I shall make man", we could not, then, have learned that He spoke to His judicial council but to Himself.

בְּדְמוּתֵנוּ **AFTER OUR** LIKENESS — with the power to comprehend and to discern.

Ramban 13th c, Grammar and Character

AND G-D SAID: 'LET US MAKE MAN.' There was a special command dedicated to the making of man because of his great superiority since his nature is unlike that of beasts and cattle which were created with the preceding command.

The correct explanation of *na'aseh* (*let us make*) [which is in the plural form when it should have been in the singular] is as follows: It has been shown to you that G-d created something from nothing only on the first day, and afterwards He formed and made things from those created elements. Thus when He gave the waters the power of bringing forth *a living soul*, the command concerning them was *Let the waters swarm*. The command concerning cattle was *Let the earth bring forth*. But in the case of man He said, *Let us make*, that is, I and the aforementioned earth, let us make man, the earth to bring forth the body from its elements as it did with cattle and beasts, as it is written, *And the Eternal G-d formed man of the dust of the ground*, and He, blessed be He, to give the spirit from His mouth, the Supreme One, as it is written, *And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*. And He said, *In our image, and after our likeness*, as man will then be similar to both. In the capacity of his body, he will be similar to the earth from which he was taken, and in spirit he will be similar to the higher beings, because it [the spirit] is not a body and will not die. In the second verse, He says, *In the image of G-d He created him*, in order to relate the distinction by which man is distinguished from the rest of created beings.

Or HaChaim 18th c, Character and Purpose

And [about] its stating, "in our image, in our likeness," it is possible that the intention is to say that there should be a side of mercy and a side of judgment in [man], to implement the ways of judgment and the ways of mercy in what they set up; and understand [it]. And that is the secret in its stating (Genesis 2:7), "And the Lord, God formed, etc." And its stating, "and let them have dominion" is in agreement with our explanation: given that the creation resembles the Creator with respect to the attributes of mercy and judgment, it follows logically that [man] should rule [over] the creations, since he has the attribute of mercy for that which it is fitting and for those that require it, and the [capability] to kill those that are guilty in judgment.

Seforno 16th c, Character

כדמותו, acting intelligently like the angels, though from free choice, not like the angels who act under Divine compulsion. In this respect, though the angels are celestial beings, they do not resemble man. In this respect man is a little more like G'd Himself than are the angels, though our habitat is in the "lower" regions of the universe. The principal difference between G'd's total freedom of action and that of man's is that G'd's freedom of action is always put to a constructive use, whereas man frequently abuses his G'd given freedom to oppose the expressed will of His Creator. At any rate, not being hampered by the limitations imposed by having a body, the qualitative freedom of G'd is far superior to that of man, and this is why the Torah uses the comparative **כדמותו**, to show that the comparison is limited.

Steinsaltz, Character

This verse is the climax of the entire account of Creation: God said: Let Us make Man in Our image, in Our likeness. Although in a physiological sense man is very similar to other living creatures, he is nevertheless a category of being to himself. Unlike other creations, man was fashioned in the image of God, not in terms of his appearance, but in terms of his essence. Aside from man's superior intelligence, this likeness is expressed principally in man's freedom to choose. This quality is unique to man and God. The rest of creation moves within its respective circles, always subject to a long chain of cause and effect. Humans are not bound by these chains.



This is Very Good

Jeff Klepper

When God made the world and made it full of light
The sun to shine by day, the moon and stars by night
God made it full of life, lilies, oaks, and trout
Tigers and bears, sparrows, hawks and apes

And God took clay from earth's four corners
To give it the breath of life, and God said:
This is very good, this is very good
Man woman and child, all are good
Man woman and child resemble God

Like God we love, like God we think, like God we care