

as do our parents, then we could begin to redefine the God-human relationship: just as it is possible for parents to learn from their children, so can God learn from us.

God learn from us? Isn't that an audacious assumption?

Though it may seem audacious to presume that we mere humans can help heal God, this is an essential part of our covenantal relationship. Being in a covenantal relationship offers the possibility of healing in both directions. For both God and humankind, healing occurs in relationship.

But if God is all-knowing and all-sufficient, why would God need to be taught anything by humans?

If God was all-knowing and all-sufficient, why did God feel the need to create humankind? It seems that God was lacking something.

What might that be?

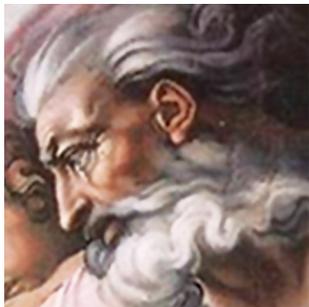
I believe that being the “one and only”

Sometimes God alters behavior and outlook in response to human intervention. For example, *Bamidbar Rabbah* notes three occasions in which Moses intervenes and God responds: “By your life! You have spoken well! You have taught me. From now on, I will...” After God threatens to punish the Israelites for worshiping the Golden Calf in the wilderness, Moses pleads: “Let not your anger, O YHWH, blaze forth against your people whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. Let not the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that He delivered them only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.’ Turn from your flaming anger and renounce the plan to punish Your people! Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how You swore to them by Your self and said to them: ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the heavens, and I will give to them all this land of which I spoke, to possess forever.’ And YHWH

balance beam of our equilibrium. Still, after repeated failures, most of us recognize that falling off is inevitable and not a comment on our worth. What counts is getting back on track. We can teach God self-esteem by demonstrating how we move forward despite our reservations and fears. And—when we have learned this lesson ourselves—we can teach God that one doesn’t have to trample on others to demonstrate one’s self-worth.

We can teach God about forgiveness. God demands repentance (in Hebrew, *teshuvah*) from humans, but sometimes remains unforgiving of our transgressions unto the third and fourth generation and beyond. We humans, who have spent endless effort and energy practicing repentance, know that the willingness to do *teshuvah* is a vital aspect of a healthy relationship. We know about searching for what the mystics call *nitzotzot kedushah*, the “holy sparks” present in and redemptive of all creation.

In addition, we can teach God about



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made God very lonely. Desirous of companionship, God, with the best of intentions, created a “perfect” world and judged it as “very good.” But when faced with issues of competition, rivalry, rejection, and perceived betrayal, God demanded total obedience. When humankind failed to meet God’s exacting standards, God became enraged and reacted by cruelly flooding the entire world, almost wiping out all of creation.

The Torah is full of stories about God’s fierce anger, rush to judgment, and cruel punishment. God needs to be taught many things, including the difference between obedience and love.

Do you believe that God is teachable?

According to a number of post-biblical Jewish texts, God is indeed teachable.

renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people” (Exodus 32:14).

But we are not Moses. What can we humans possibly teach God?

God enters into relationship with humanity knowing next to nothing about how to relate. We humans, on the other hand, have a great deal of experience living in relationships. We struggle day-by-day to live with and love others despite their imperfections and our own. We’ve learned how to build respectful relationships—and we can teach God about what it takes to live peaceably in a relationship with loved ones who do not bend to our will or always live up to our expectations.

We can teach God about self-esteem. God needs constant reassurance. We too often lack faith in ourselves and fall off the

the preciousness of human life through the ways we act to preserve and sanctify our lives.

In short, how *we* as God’s partners model ourselves divinely can teach God how to be in the very world that God created.

How do we begin to change our relationship with God?

We start by changing ourselves. In any healthy relationship, when we change, our partner changes. So when we humans become exemplars of what it means to be fully human—often in areas God knows little about—God will have to grow and change, too. In short, by becoming fully human, we help God to become a better exemplar. And that’s no small thing. What more could any exemplar—Divine or human—want? □