



As God begins to create the first human being—the *Adam*—he says, “Let us make the earth-creature in our own image.” The text goes on: “Then God created *it* in God’s own image. Male and female God created *them*” (Genesis 1:26–27).

The text seems to be saying (and the rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash understood it this way) that *Adam* was created by God as male *and* female. The rabbis spoke openly about this, and even composed elaborate speculative stories about the separation of this hermaphroditic creature into the male and female characters that we know as Adam and Eve. What the rabbis were less willing to openly discuss was the extent to which this earth creature was created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the dual-gendered image of God.

But if we read the text as a mystic might, paying extremely close attention and assuming that the biblical text conceals more than it reveals, we may find hints regarding God’s androgynous nature. Consider, for example, that the Torah:

- identifies Moses as a nursing father (Numbers 11:12)
- tells us that Adam named his wife Eve *ki hu hay’tah eim* “because *he* was the mother of all the living” (Genesis 3:20)
- recounts that Abraham instructed his servant to be on the lookout for a woman who will offer to water the camels because *hu ha’ishah*, “*he* is the woman” for my son (Genesis 24:44)
- And the list goes on.

Why is the Torah repeatedly conflating the genders of its main characters? What is the Torah hinting at?

I believe these are not mistakes/scribal errors, but the very key to unlocking one of the Torah’s most enduring mysteries.

But first a note about the many strange occurrences in the Torah regarding names. Our patriarch Jacob’s name is

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twice changed to Israel. Pharaoh is not a name. And Moses is not a name. Moses, in Egyptian, means “born of”—as in the name Tutmosis (Born of Tut).

Consider: if the name of our great leader Moses is not really a name, might it mean something else? Interestingly, if we spell Moses’ name in Hebrew backwards, *Moshe* becomes *HaShem*, which literally means “The Name,” one of the ways some Jews refer to God.

Then consider: if Moses’ name spelled backwards becomes *HaShem*, reflecting the Godly nature of the human being, might not God’s name spelled backward

ple reason that it is written in reverse?

Reversed, the Name of God becomes *Hay Vov Hay Yud*. And these two syllables, *Hay Vov* and *Hay Yud*, can be vocalized as the sound equivalents of the Hebrew pronouns *hu* and *hi*, which are rendered in English as he and she respectively. Combining them together, *Hay Vov* and *Hay Yud* become He-She.

He-She, I believe, is the long-unpronounceable Name of God! This secret has been hiding in plain sight for all these years, for it explicitly states in the Torah: God created the earth-creature in God’s own image, male and female.

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similarly reflect something essential about humankind? Indeed it does.

Look at *Yud–Hay–Vov–Hay*, the ineffable Name of God. Known as the Tetragrammaton, the Name was permitted for everyday greetings until at least 586 B.C.E., when the First Temple was destroyed (*Mishnah Berakhot* 9:5). In time its pronunciation was permitted only to the priests (*Mishnah Sotah* 7:6), who would pronounce it in their public blessing of the people. After the death of the High Priest Shimon HaTzaddik around 300 B.C.E. (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Yoma* 39b) the name was pronounced only by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur (*Mishnah Sotah* 7:6; *Mishnah Tamid* 7:2). The sages then passed on the pronunciation of the Name to their disciples only once (some say twice) every seven years (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Kiddushin* 71a). Finally, upon the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the Name was no longer pronounced at all.

Later, some speculated that the Name had been pronounced “Jehovah,” or possibly “Yahweh,” but scholars did not agree. No one knew for a certainty how to pronounce the ineffable Name of God.

But what if *Yud–Hay–Vov–Hay* has long been unpronounceable for the sim-



less to say, the notion of an androgynous God creating essentially androgynous human beings has profound implications. Long ago the *Zohar*, the book of Jewish mysticism par excellence, declared, “It is incumbent on a man to ever be male and female”—a strange statement especially in the 13th century. But recently our society has begun to show signs of being able to understand, and willing to accept, this message.

Dr. James Garbarino, one of our generation’s most influential child development experts, observes that so-called “traditional girls who have only ‘feminine’ characteristics are at a disadvantage when it comes to coping” and so-called traditional boys are also disadvantaged. “Combining traditionally feminine traits with masculine traits,” Garbarino wrote in *See Jane Hit*, “makes for greater resilience.”

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, author of *Searching for My Brothers*, notes that Jewish and Western cultures have long held very different perspectives on the issue of androgyny. While Western culture says “be a man,” he explains, the message of Jewish culture has always been “be a *mensch*.” *Menschlichkeit*, which he defines as “mature