The Creation of Woman (Gen. 2:21-22)

As we explained last time, man unlike animals, was initially created alone, without a female mate. When man, Adam, sees the animals he realizes two things: 1. That he does not have a mate, like all animals. 2. And that he is a different being, with intelligence. And therefore, the mate he needs (and according to the Sages: “for which the man prays for”) still does not exist. Then the Creator (according to the Sages: at the request of man) fashions a woman.

The creation of the first woman is related in two pesuquim (verses), Bereshit (Genesis) 2: 21-22:

(2:21) Then HaShem caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and as he slept, He took one of his ribs, and then He closed the wound. (2:22) From the rib that had taken away from man, HaShem designed the woman and brought it to the man. ”

Let us see what the Biblical commentator Radaq (Ribbi David Qimhi, 1160-1235) has to say about this verse.

GENERAL ANESTHESIA

Radaq explains that in Hebrew there are several words to describe different levels of sleep, such as numbness, sleepiness, somnolence, etc. The Hebrew word “tardema”, used in this verse, expresses the deepest level of sleep.”Tardema”, which is correctly used in modern Hebrew to describe anesthesia (hardama), indicates a state of unconsciousness that could be compared to a deep trance or a hypnotic state, where the nervous system does not respond to pain or stimuli. According to Radaq, there are two reasons why HaShem made Adam sleep. 1. Obviously so he does not suffer pain when his rib is extracted from his body. Radaq explains that Adam woke up only once pain disappeared. 2. Adam did not see the “surgical”

process of woman’s creation. Seeing this specific process could have produced in Adam a sense of verticality towards the woman; or could have caused him rejection, by associating the woman with pain or with something that is not pleasant to his eyes. All this is avoided the “anesthesia”. And so, as we will see in the next pasuq (2:23), when man wakes up and “discovers” the woman, he becomes fascinated with her.

MAXIMIZING MIRACLES OR MINIMIZING MIRACLES.

Since the times of the Mishna, until today, we find in rabbinical literature two opposite traditions regarding Divine intervention in the Bible, when it is not explicit. A tradition, formulated mainly by Ribbi Aquiba and his disciples, maximizes miracles and divine intervention. Ribbi Ishmael (contemporary of Ribbi Aqiba) on the other hand, minimizes divine intervention when this is not explicit and absolutely necessary. Example: Ribbí Aquibá argues that the Sukkot that protected the people of Israel in the desert were miraculous clouds that surrounded them from all sides (anana kabod). Ribbi Ishmael, on the other hand, says that they were actually simply huts (sukkot mamash). In general Radaq, Maimonides and biblical commentators who explain the Tora from a linguistic perspective, follow this tradition. Other commentators like Rashi and especially Ramban (Nahmanides) who comment on the Tora from an Agadic (Rashi) or mystical (Ramban) perspective follow the tradition of Ribbi Aqiba.

Now we can better understand what Radaq says about this divine action: HaShem “numbed” man, which he says, is possible by natural methods, and did not extract his rib in a “supernatural” way so that miraculously he would not feel pain, since “The Creator does not intervene miraculously when an act can be realized by Him in a natural way.”

דע שלא יעשה הא-ל מופת במקום שאין צריך מופת , והפלת התרדימה (אינה מופת וחדוש)

YOUR OWN FLESH AND BONE

Finally, let’s look at the deeper meaning of this verse.

First, the rabbis said, the rib is close to the heart. The rib was composed not only by bone but also by the flesh of man. Eva was created more or less as if she were a “clone” of Adam, something created directly out of a previous living creature, therefore almost identical to him (at certain levels). While the animals were created from the same source, and the male animal feels for the female a fundamentally hormonal attraction, man and woman (exclusively!) share or are part, so to speak, of the *same* body. According to the Tora, man carries a “wound”, invisible but permanent, which is also a loss. Man cannot feel complete without the woman. He lacks something that can only be achieved when he clings to the woman. In other words, in the Tora the attraction of man for woman *begins* as a need to fill a huge emptiness he has, and to reach his own fullness.

We see, therefore, that before sexuality becomes manifest, man and woman have an “heartfeltly” , ”emotional”, and “deeply psychological” base for attraction, beyond the hormonal factor.