

Fall of Man in Three Parts

by [Petr Chylek](#) (May 2024)



Maimonides –by Ben Shahn, 1957

A famous philosopher and mystic, Rabbi Moshe Maimonides (1138–1204) said that the whole teaching of Torah is contained in the first two books of Moses, Genesis and Exodus. The remaining three books, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are just a commentary, and the remaining books of the Old Testament (TANAK) are a commentary on a commentary.[\[1\]](#) Today, I would like to talk about the early part of Genesis and the later part of Exodus.

Part I: Creation of Man and Woman

On the sixth day, Elohim (God) said, “Let us make a human (Adam) in Our image after Our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26) However, in the next verse, we read: “So Elohim created a human in his image, in the image of Elohim He created it; male and female He created them.” Only in His image, not in His likeness. What does this mean? Most of the commentators of the Torah and most of the priests and other teachers in their sermons ignore the fact that human was not created in the likeness of God. Yes, the original intention was to create Adam in His image and likeness. However, later, God apparently changed His mind. Now, Adam has been created only in the image of God; not in his likeness. It means that Adam is not like a God. He has only the potential to become like God. He has to use his free will to make the right choices. He has to change himself, to rebuild himself to become Godly.

God gave man two basic instructions: “Be fruitful and multiply,” and “I have given to you all herbage-yielding seed ... and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit; it shall be yours for food.” (Genesis 1:28-29) The man had no difficulty with the former, however, the latter instruction he did not like and it had to be later modified.[\[2\]](#)

God formed the human from the dust of the ground and He blew into its nostrils the Soul (NESHAMAH) of life, and the human

became a living soul (NEFESH) (Gen 2:7). In this verse the Torah uses two different Hebrew names for the Soul, but both are just a "soul" in English. The highest part of the Soul, which can develop a direct connection to the Divine, is called NESHAMAH. The lowest part of the Soul is called NEFESH and it communicates to our awareness that we need to drink, eat, sleep, and other desires of the body. There is an additional part of our soul, in the middle, RUACH, that is related to our emotional states. Thus, God breathed into a human the whole Soul including its highest part (NESHAMAH) and the human (Adam) became a living being aware only of its lowest part (NEFESH). Here is the potential for the fall of man, but just an unrealized potential for now.

At this point, man had a special ability that distinguished him from other parts of creation. God brought to Adam various animals and Adam was able to name them by giving them proper Hebrew names composed of the sounds (Hebrew letters) that captured their essence. Thus, man had a special ability to translate images into sound (names).

Since each action starts with a thought, before we do a definite action, we have to decide to do it. According to the Torah, God put Adam to sleep, separated one of his sides (rib in most English translations), and fashioned it into a woman (Genesis 2:21-22). The Torah does not mention whether God woke up man or whether he remains asleep. In any case, the man was amazed. He declared: "This is bone of my bones, the flesh of my flesh ... Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh." This statement is notable because in the Kabbalah, the father means wisdom (CHOCHMA), and the mother means understanding (BINAH). Thus, Adam made himself ready to fall by disconnecting himself from wisdom and understanding. He transformed his potential to fall into a thought. Now, he is just waiting for an opportunity to arrive.

Part II: Adam and Eve

And here was Eve coming, with an apple in her hand. "She saw that the tree was good for eating ... and she took of its fruit and ate and she gave also to her husband and he ate" (Genesis 3:6). When God confronted Adam with what he had done, Adam found an excuse: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave it to me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:12)

Now mankind had a choice. To follow God's instruction or Adam's example. They took a vote and the vast majority voted for Adam. God became angry and he was sorry that he ever created man, since the man turned from his birth to become evil. Thus, God decided to destroy mankind. At the last minute, He saved one righteous man, Noah, and his family by advising him to build an Ark. After the flood destroyed all other people, God promised never again to try to destroy mankind by a flood. Thus mankind was left with the task of inventing another means of how to destroy itself.

Part III: Mt Sinai

I do not know what Mt Sinai means. However, some Rabbis call it also Mt Horeb (Exodus 33:6; 1 Kings 19:11-12) and claim that Mt Sinai and Mt Horeb are the same things. Horeb in Hebrew means "dry" or "wasted." At Mt Sinai, all people heard the sound of shofar. Who blew the shofar?

The people said to Moses: "You speak to us and we will hear ... let not God speak to us ..." (Exodus 20:16) People rejected the possibility of getting a direct connection to the Divine. They abolished the path of mysticism, a path of direct communication from the Divine, and became satisfied with what became a religion. This is the real fall of mankind; we sold our birthright. A Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) said "God created the world, but He did not create religion." [\[3\]](#)

Thus, Moses went to the Lord and people did not go with him ... and Moses came and told to the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgment, and all people answered with one voice and said "All the words that God has said, we will do." (Exodus 24:3)

Now, somebody knows what God requires of us, and he will tell us so that we just do it. Very convenient. No special effort to learn God's will is needed, we just have to do as we are told. However, we need to make hundreds of decisions each day. How do we know which way to go?

Zohar [\[4\]](#) explains that those who can hear directly become children of the King, and those who can hear only through an interpreter become servants of the King. Perhaps you can feel the difference. Moses Maimonides taught that any person with a little (or a lot) of effort can learn to hear a tiny Divine voice, the Divine Inspiration, or Ruach HaKodesh in Hebrew. This was one of the reasons for a fight between the Rabbinic establishment and Maimonides. It is known as the Maimonides Controversy. [\[5\]](#) Rabbis taught that with the death of the last prophets, God does not speak to people anymore and we all should learn from interpreters. Any claim of direct contact with the Divine, and your mystical experience is just a hallucination. Unfortunately, this is the attitude of many religious teachers even today.

Epilogue

A few thousand years have passed between us and the time of events described. Mankind has changed. Many are looking for more than what organized religions usually offer. Many found at least a partial answer to their search in Eastern religions. However, Western religions have also a rich mystical tradition. It is high time for current teachers to turn back to the mystical tradition of their religions. As

Meister Eckhart said: “Theologians argue, but mystics speak a common language.”[\[6\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) M. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Dover Publications, New York 1956.

[\[2\]](#) I read somewhere that: A man who does not study Torah is not allowed to eat meat. A man who studies the Torah is allowed to eat meat, however, he abstains.

[\[3\]](#) F. Rozenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

[\[4\]](#) *The Zohar* by Shimon bar Yochai with commentary by Yehuda Ashlag, Kabbalah Center International, New York and Los Angeles 2003.

[\[5\]](#) Maimonides as the Greatest Jewish Mystic, *New English Review*, September 2022.

[\[6\]](#) Meister Eckhart and Moses Maimonides, *New English Review*, January 2024.

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