

Foundations of Hope: Basic Trust and Creation in the Image of God

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Created in the image of [God] who has no image, it is incumbent upon ...
[humanity] to invoke and create hope where there is none.

—Elie Wiesel¹

Our core beliefs about ourselves and humanity have a great deal to do with our capacity to hope. If we believe that human beings are fundamentally decent, we can look at the imperfections in ourselves and the world and decide to roll up our sleeves and try to fix them. Our ability to envision a better world, our willingness to trust in others enough to help us build it, and our conviction that our efforts may bear fruit bespeak our capacity to hope. Alas, some cannot imagine tomorrow's being significantly brighter than today. They don't trust others enough to build a healthy working relationship. And they are quite sure that their efforts will be futile. Call this despair.

Hope versus despair. What does Judaism have to say about that choice?

“Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness.... And God created humankind in the divine image, creating them in the image of God—creating them male and female” (Genesis 1:26-27). This implies that human beings possess a fundamental goodness, which means we can trust them, can establish intimate relationships with them, work together to create a better society, and we can try to repair it when it fails. The very first thing the Bible says about humanity creates a deep reservoir of hope.

This chapter explores the relationship between hope and creation in the Divine image, *b'tselem Elohim*, in two ways. First, we look at the three references in the book of Genesis to *b'tselem Elohim* and then at three Divine attributes we share with God that help sustain a basis for hope. As a psychologist, I am fascinated by the relationship between *b'tselem Elohim* and Erikson's ideas about the experiences that generate trust and hope. (These are available at *What Is Hope?* under “Resources” at Choosinghope.net. Passages in this essay that reflect Erikson's theoretical and clinical insights have been italicized.)

Before we go further, let me suggest a general approach to the texts we will be exploring. Theologian Timothy Luke Johnson views biblical texts as “imaginative worlds ... a set of witnesses that powerfully prescribe reality; not as an assortment of propositions about the world, but as an imaginative construction of a world within which humans can choose to live, a world they can embody through practices consistent with that vision.”² In terms of creation in the image of God, Johnson argues that we should read the Bible prescriptively rather than descriptively—as an invitation for *us* to shape the world and relations between people, rather

than as a literal account of how *God* did so. My definition of hope—Hope reflects our embrace of the possibility of a particular, deeply desired future and fuels our actions to help bring it about—harmonizes very well Johnson’s perspective.

The Bible’s assertion that we are created in the image of God bears witness to the deepest hopes of God and humanity about the kind of world we can and ought to create.

The Divine Image in Genesis

B’tselem I—Uniqueness and Value

“Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness.... And God created humankind in the divine image, creating them in the image of God—creating them male and female” (Genesis 1:26-27).

God creates other creatures and blesses them, as God blesses the first human beings, but nothing else in the creation story is said to bear God’s image. The uniqueness of humanity in the scheme of creation mirrors the uniqueness of the Creator and endows us with extraordinary value, a key constituent of basic trust and the capacity for hope. *When children feel consistently valued as unique individuals they begin to see a benign, affirming world they can trust, a world where hope is well founded. As adults, when we see ourselves as images of God we tap into a belief that has nurtured humanity’s trust and hope for millennia.*

Judaism’s first law code, the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), famously echoes these sentiments about humanity’s uniqueness and value. When a person stamps many coins, one is the same as the next, but when God stamps each individual with a Divine seal, each one is different. “Therefore everyone must say, ‘For my sake the world was created’” (m. Sanhedrin 4:5). *Parents must be able to appreciate the uniqueness of their children. To treat one as a clone of another paints a picture of an insensitive, untrustworthy outer world.*

The Mishnah mentioned above concludes that “One who takes a single life is counted as if one had destroyed the entire world . . . And when one saves a life, it is as though one had saved an entire world.”³ The Mishnah supports what Abraham Joshua Heschel called a “supreme imperative: *Treat thyself as an image of God.*”⁴

These teachings extend beyond how we should treat ourselves. Heschel goes on to quote a medieval scholar who concluded that “our esteem for man must be as great as our esteem for God.” *When a family—and later a community—treats its members as images of God, it reinforces a collective sense of uniqueness and goodness, essential ingredients of basic trust and the capacity for hope. When life depletes the reserves of hope, when degradation batters our sense of value and trust, the knowledge that we—along with everyone else—are created in the Divine image helps restore trust in a benevolent world and the hope that goes along with it.*

B’tselem II—Equality and Irrevocability

This is the record of Adam's line.—When God created humankind, it was made in the likeness of God; male and female were they created. And when they were created, [God] blessed them and called them Humankind.^o When Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth (Gen. 5:1-3).

The language differs slightly—in the “likeness” versus in the “image” of God—but the concept remains the same. This verse, too, has become the subject of a celebrated rabbinic teaching. A third-century text describes an argument between two second-century sages about Judaism's cardinal principle. Rabbi Akiva says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Ben Azzai cites the above passage from Genesis: “This is the record of Adam's line...”. To Ben Azzai, the fundamental equality of all human beings—who have all equally been created in God's image—stands as the bedrock of Jewish ethics.⁵ A fifth-century midrash implicitly agrees with Ben Azzai: “Thus, one should not say, ‘Since I have been humiliated, I will humiliate my neighbor as well; since I have been cursed, I will curse my fellow as well.’ Rabbi Tanchumah said, “If you act thus, realize who it is that you are willing to have humiliated—the one who was made in the likeness of God.”⁶ Likewise, in the dozen or so appearances it makes in the Talmud

Why did Ben Azzai choose this particular verse to invoke the ethical imperative deriving from creation in God's image? Perhaps because this is the only one that makes it explicit that the image of God is passed down from generation to generation. God did not just make Adam and Eve in the Divine image. Their descendants—and thus all of humanity—bear that likeness as well. A midrash underscores this point: “Every person walking upon this earth has a procession of angels that goes before him, and as they go these angels are proclaiming, ‘Make way, make way for the image of God!’”⁷

What does it mean to say that Judaism's cardinal principle is that human beings are created in God's image? Arthur Green (1941-) puts it this way:

Any Judaism that veers from the ongoing work of helping us allow every human being to become and be seen as God's image in the fullest way possible is a distortion of Judaism. The ongoing challenge requires us in every generation to widen the circle of those seen by us as fully human, as bearing God's image, as we seek to expand the bounds of the holy.⁸

The task of widening the circle of those seen as images of God begins with parents. Parents who instill a sense of value and uniqueness in their children must also teach them that they are fundamentally no better than anyone else—that everyone shares those qualities equally. It's a hard lesson for children to accept and an easy one for adults to forget. When we forget it, or if we haven't learned it, we see ourselves as the center of the universe—like Joseph who dreamed that his siblings and parents were bowing down to him. Treating people that way makes them hate us—not exactly a basis for trust or hope. Rabbinic texts invoking creation in the Divine

image stress the equality of human beings and put a break on pathological narcissism—or at least they try to.

The context of the Bible's second reference to creation in the Divine image teaches another lesson: the irrevocability of the Divine image. The verse comes at the beginning of a genealogy that stretches over the ten generations between Adam and Eve and Noah. In the chapter of Genesis that precedes this verse, Cain kills Abel. In the chapter that succeeds it, God vows to bring the Flood to cleanse the earth of its corruption. (Whether or not God's treatment of humanity at this juncture was justified is an important question. For more on this, see *Learning from Failure* below, as well as the discussion of Jonah in *Choosing Hope*, chapter 1). Human beings, created in the Divine image, have fallen far short of God's expectations. After creation, we witness a decline that steepens precariously as the generations count down to Noah. Yet, precisely at this juncture, just before God thoroughly sickens of humanity, we are reminded again that human beings are created in the image of God.

Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888, Germany), whose seminal work influenced what would become Modern Orthodoxy, stresses this point in his commentary on Genesis. At moments when humanity's imperfections stare us in the face, the presence of this reference to *b'tselem Elohim* reminds us that the Divine image within each of us can never be destroyed.⁹

The Divine image within, that guarantor of value, does not depend on our behavior. *When parents undermine a misbehaving child's fundamental sense of value they diminish trust and hope.* The biblical context of this reference to creation in the Divine image reminds us that we possess an inherent value that can never be taken away. Hope flows from knowing that even when we fall short, we—and all of humanity—can always improve by building upon the Divine image we each possess.

B'tselem III—Acting the Part

Whoever sheds human blood,
By human [hands] shall that one's blood be shed;
For in the image of God
Was humankind made. (Gen. 9:6)

The third and final reference in Genesis to *b'tselem Elohim* reminds us that because we *know* we are images of God, we have a responsibility to act the part.¹⁰ The connections between this verse and hope will soon become clear.

This passage marks the first time human beings are expressly informed about their creation in the image of God. In the two previous instances, the narrator informs the reader about this, but here God tells Noah and his family directly. In addition to other changes God introduces after the flood—charging humanity with the responsibility to punish murderers, among others—God also decides that now we should *know* that we have been created *b'tselem Elohim*.

On one level, this knowledge provides a deterrent to murder and a rationale for its punishment. Thus, Rabbi Akiva used this passage from Genesis to conclude that “one who sheds blood is regarded as one who has impaired God’s image.”¹¹ But, on another level, *knowing* that we are created in God’s image creates awareness of our true potential. Rabbi Akiva viewed this awareness as a special gift: “He used to say, ‘Beloved is man in that he was created in the image of God. But it is a mark of super-abundant love that this was made *known* to him.’”¹² As Ya’akov Yosef of Polnoye, an early Hasidic master, put it, the fact that we know we are created in the Divine image gives us a chance—through our deeds—to actualize this image. Otherwise it remains *in potentia*.¹³ So while this reference to *b’tselem Elohim* narrowly refers to the responsibility of bringing murderers to justice, a job once assumed by God, more broadly, it points to our potential to dedicate ourselves to *acting* as images of God. To be aware of our enormous potential unleashes hope in our ability to fulfill it.

It’s not enough for parents to feel that their children possess intrinsic goodness, value, and uniqueness. They must communicate and inculcate that conviction in their offspring. Then parents must gradually help their children act in ways commensurate with those qualities. That is what God begins to do here. Prior to the flood, God punished those who took human life. Now, God passes that responsibility on to us. As the transition takes place, God tells us something fundamental about who we are, and that we are expected to act the part. God’s message affirms basic trust in humanity’s potential to administer justice, to create a world built on ethics. The hope of living in an ethical world now lies in our hands.

In a 1963 essay describing the religious basis for racial equality, Heschel argued that “The image of God is either in every man or in no man...The greatest heresy is despair, despair of men’s power for goodness, men’s power for love.”¹⁴ We share the earth with billions of images of God. That is what we are; we know it. And we also know that we each have the potential to do enormous good. The power to pursue justice and to restore peace and tranquility lies in our hands. We can build a world in which God, too, would reside. Deuteronomy calls us to walk in God’s paths (10:12). It goes on to tell us that God “shows no favor and takes no bribe, but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (10:17-19). To walk in God’s path is to act in a godly way. It is never too late to start; we will never cease to be images of God.

Three Divine Attributes

The Talmud explains what Deuteronomy means when it calls us to “follow” God (13:5): “Just as God clothed the naked, so should we clothe the naked.”¹⁵ We can walk in God’s ways because we share various attributes with God. God possesses infinite value, and so do we. God embodies justice, and so should we. When we think about the relationship between *b’tselem Elohim* and hope, it is important to consider three interrelated attributes that we share with God: creativity, the ability to learn from failure, and the freedom to change.

Creative Potential

What are the connections between human creativity and hope? Genesis always refers to *b'tselem Elohim* in the context of God's creative activity. This suggests that the potential for creativity is itself one of the hallmarks of what it means to be created in God's image. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (1903-1993), the leader of Modern Orthodox Jewry in the second half of the twentieth century, suggests that we face a choice between acting as "images of God or beasts of prey," and that joining God as partners in creation constitutes Judaism's deepest hope.¹⁶

There is another connection between creativity and hope. Hope involves imagining a reality not yet born, an act that sometimes demands a great deal of creativity. To passively hope that a cloud burst will not ruin your picnic requires no creativity at all. To hope that you can find your way through a seemingly impossible conundrum requires tremendous imagination and a willingness to take action. Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), the French philosopher, playwright, and theologian, compared one who demonstrates this kind of active hope to

[an] inventor or discoverer who says, "There must be a way" and who adds: "I am going to find it." He who hopes says simply: "It will be found." In hoping, I do not create in the strict sense of the word, but I appeal to the existence of a certain creative power in the world, or rather to the actual resources at the disposal of this creative power."¹⁷

To be created in the Divine image means having within oneself an element of God's creativity. That spark of Divine creativity endows each of us with the ability to envision an alternate reality, a capacity manifested in the deepest forms of active hope.

An ancient midrash tells the story of Nahshon ben Aminadav, Prince of the tribe of Judah, who jumped into the Red Sea when members of the other tribes remained unwilling to put a toe in the water.¹⁸ Nahshon was not suicidal. He acted from a profound sense of hope—hope borne of an imagined outcome that not even Moses had yet conceived. Active hope and creativity are two sides of the same coin. The creativity that flows from *b'tselem Elohim* sustains hope. It allows us to envision an alternative to the present and fashion the means to get from here to there. The concept of *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world (*Choosing Hope*, chapter 2), rests on this very foundation of creativity, imagination, and hope. Nahman of Breslov (1772-1810) said that our creation in the image of God means that we, like God, have an imagination.¹⁹ Without imagination, there can be no hope.

Learning from Failure

Experiencing failure puts hope to the test. Can we pick ourselves up and imagine a more successful future, or will we remain mired in the gloom of defeat? Erikson reminds us that, initially, the capacity to restore basic trust and hope in the face of failure must be nourished by parental consolation. But, over time, we internalize that ability and find other sources of support—religion among them—to help us cope with setbacks. It may sound surprising, but one of the attributes that flows from *b'tselem Elohim* is the potential to experience failure, to learn

from it, and to move on. Because God learns from failure, so can we. How can this be? Isn't God perfect? Yes, the Bible does offer some support for this picture of God. Moses calls God "The Rock . . . whose deeds are perfect" (Deut. 32:4). David likewise asserts that "the way of God is perfect" (II Samuel 22:31). But more often, the Bible tells a strikingly different story. God creates the world and humanity and pronounces it "very good." Ten generations later, God declares humankind's wickedness irreparable: "every plan devised by the human mind was nothing but evil all the time. And YHVH regretted having made humankind on earth . . . [w]ith a sorrowful heart . . ." (Gen. 6:5-6). It is easy to put the blame on humanity, but that does not eliminate God's utter dejection over the fact that Creation fell so short of Divine expectations.

A midrash from the eighth or ninth centuries recounts God's thoughts in connection with the report in Genesis of God's "sorrowful heart" (Gen. 6:6):

He . . . lamented over the human heart. Like one who had made something inferior, God knew that He had not made something right, and said, "What have I made? So I am the one who put the leaven [here viewed as a source of evil] in the dough."²⁰

The good news is that God learns from failure. As we have seen, after the Flood, God charges humanity with the responsibility for punishing capital offenses. God also tells Noah that humanity has been created in the Divine image. And following the Flood, God expands the human diet, allowing the consumption of meat. Perhaps God realized that it was too much to expect people to sacrifice animals to God, to feed God, as it were, without sharing in the feast. It must not have been easy to turn away from aromas of the sacrificial barbecue on an empty stomach. Perhaps God hoped that sharing this element of the Divine diet with humanity would make it a little easier for people to behave as images of God.

In any case, the Flood provides but one of many examples in which God experiences failure—and learns from it. Jack Miles, the author of *God: A Biography*, put it this way:

After each of his major actions, he discovers that he has not done quite what he thought he was doing, or has done something he never intended to do. He did not realize that when he told mankind to "be fertile and increase" that he was creating an image of himself that was also a rival creator. He did not realize that when he destroyed his rival he would regret the destruction of his image.²¹

For most of us, failure causes such discomfort that we avoid facing it. We blame others, or we simply deny the evidence. Many factors make failure difficult to manage, but one stands out: the unrealistic expectation that we should somehow be perfect. Suffice to say, this contributes to enormous suffering.

The lesson from the story of the Flood is that not even God is perfect. God fails. But God does not give up. God keeps trying. Creation 1.0 bombed, so God rolls out Creation 2.0. The Bible says the name Noah, *Noach* in Hebrew, derives from a root which means *to comfort*.²² Noah

represents God's glimmer of hope. Even when things do not turn out well, there is usually something worth salvaging, a reason to hope that the next effort may turn out better.

The next time your project blows up, remember, that happened to God, too. You are in good company. And remember to draw comfort and hope from that piece of the project that will serve as the foundation for your next try.²³

Freedom to Change

Although the Bible provides some support for the concept of a God who does not change—"For I am YHVH, I do not change..." declares Malachi (3:6)—the arc of biblical narrative depicts a God who constantly changes. Compare the God who sends a flood to destroy the world, with no warning and no opportunity for repentance, with the God who sends Jonah to urge Nineveh's repentance (see *Choosing Hope*, chapter 1, on *T'shuvah*.) The story ends with God chiding the bitter Jonah for failing to understand God's compassion for "that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!" (4:11).

The notion that God can, and does, change should come as no surprise at all. When Moses asks to know God's name, God responds, *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* (Ex. 3:14), literally, "I will be who I will be."²⁴ God's essential nature is future. God embodies potential, freedom, and change. This is "the God of becoming," a term many process theologians use. Alas, in place of this protean God with unbounded orientation toward the future, many translations of *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* leave us with a fixed "I am that I am," eternally stuck in the present.²⁵

To be created in the image of a God who can evolve means that within the limits of what it means to be human, we share the Divine potential to change. This relates to hope in two ways: First, just knowing that we have the potential to change constitutes an enormous source of hope. Despair feeds on the belief that tomorrow will be a clone of today. Hope flourishes from the conviction that tomorrow is a new day, that the present does not exhaust the future's possibilities—for ourselves or the world.

Second, we share God's essential orientation to the future, the arena hope seeks to influence. This, argues Jonathan Sacks, makes us "agents of hope":

If God defines himself as "I will be what I will be," then he is telling us that, created in his image, we too can be what we will be.... To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope. Every ritual, every command, every syllable of the Jewish story is a protest against escapism, resignation and the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism, the religion of the free God, is a religion of freedom. Jewish faith is written in the future tense. It is belief in a future that is not yet but could be, if we heed God's call, obey his will and act together as a covenantal community. The name of the Jewish future is hope.²⁶

The notion of *b'tselem Elohim* reinforces the conviction that our trust in the world bequeathed to us from reliable parenting is indeed well-founded. A world populated by images of God is indeed worthy of trust. Even when parenting has not been so reliable, or when the world seems unworthy of our trust, *b'tselem Elohim* reminds us of the human potential to be better and of the possibility of rebuilding trust and, thereby, the hope it engenders.

The Bible's three references to creation in the Divine image each illuminate different elements of fundamental human hopes—that we are each unique, that we are all equally endowed with supreme value, and that the core of goodness we possess is irrevocable. Creation in God's image implies that we possess additional Divine attributes as well. We share God's creative potential, ability to learn from mistakes, and freedom to become what we will become. Each of these qualities strengthens the basis for hope.

¹ Elie Wiesel, “A Meditation on Hope,” The Inaugural May Smith Lecture: Post-Holocaust Christian/Jewish Dialogue, Florida Atlantic University, March 10, 2003 (no page numbers). I’ve tried to create more gender-sensitive translations of biblical passages by using *The Contemporary Torah*” *A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* edited by David E. S. Stein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006) for the Pentateuch (except using YHWH for יהוה) and applying its general approach to passages from Prophets or Writings. I’ve often gender sensitized other quoted sources by replacing gendered language with alternate text in brackets.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Miracles: God’s Presence and Power in Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), loc. 923-25, Kindle. The influential American philosopher Richard Rorty (1931-2007) thought of himself as an atheist. Yet, in his concept of social hope, he approaches texts (whether of a religious or secular nature) in ways not so different than Johnson did: “When reading the texts themselves, we should skip lightly past the predictions, and concentrate on the hope. We should read...[such texts] as inspirational documents, appeals to what Lincoln called ‘the better angels of our nature,’ rather than as accurate accounts of human history or human destiny.” See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 205.

³ The last text is sometimes rendered in terms of taking or saving “a life in Israel.” This is not the original version of the text. See Gilbert Rosenthal, “The Strange Tale of a Familiar Text,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 3, no. 1 (May 2007).

⁴ Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Sacred Image of Man,” in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966), 154 and 156 (italics in original). The second quotation cites Rabbi Meir ben Todros Halevi Abulafia (1180-1244), who is quoted in the sixteenth-century Midrash Shmuel, a commentary on Pirkei Avot by Rabbi Samuel da Uceda. See *Midrash Shmuel* (Jerusalem: Makhon Haktav, 2001), 297, <https://HebrewBooks.org/39934>.

⁵ For a review of the centrality of *b’tselem Elohim* in Jewish thought, and especially Jewish law, see Yair Lorberbaum, *In God’s Image: Myth, Theology, and Law in Classical Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Lorberbaum concludes: “The idea of creation in God’s image is a crossroad at which fundamental issues in religious thought intersect. It integrates conceptions relating to God and his attributes (theology) and to man (anthropology) with a conception of representation (relating to the icon, *zelem*), illuminating the connections among them. Indeed, there is perhaps no other idea that brings humanity and God into such a close ‘encounter.’ Moreover, the concept of man being made in the divine image bears directly upon ethics, jurisprudence, and halakhah, to the extent that it has been argued that these are its central foci” (xii). This does not mean that the concept of *b’tselem Elohim* was equally influential in all periods of Jewish history. As Lorberbaum notes, it was particularly vital in the tannaitic period (70-200 CE), and less so in the amoraic and geonic periods (200-1000). It again became central in the medieval period and remains so today.

⁶ See Sifra on Leviticus 2:16, as well as Genesis Rabbah 24:7.

⁷ Deut. Rabbah, 4:4

⁸ Arthur Green, *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 124.

⁹ Sampson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Chumash* (New York: Judaica Press, 1989), 117 (Genesis 5:1).

¹⁰ A distinction can be drawn between *Imago Dei*, the image of God, and *Imitatio Dei*, imitation of God. In part, the distinction rests on the issue of intrinsic properties that flow from being created in the image of God versus the call to act in a Godly way. Following that distinction, the Bible’s first two references to creation in the Divine image involve *Imago Dei*, while the third (and the three attributes discussed later) involve *Imitatio Dei*. But, in truth, the distinction breaks down because the imperative to act in a godly way, *Imitatio Dei*, rests on the premise of *Imago Dei*. We do not expect animals to imitate God because we do not believe that they possess the Divine image in the same way that human beings do.

¹¹ Genesis Rabbah, 34:14.

¹² Mishnah Avot, 3:14.

¹³ Ya’akov Yosef of Polnoye, *Toldot Ya’akov: Sefer Bemidbar* (Agudat Beit Veilipoli: Jerusalem, 1973), 599, <https://hebrewbooks.org/14214>, BI 29+.

¹⁴ Abraham Joshua Heschel, “The Religious Basis of Equality of Opportunity—The Segregation of God” in *Race: Challenge to Religion*, ed. Mathew Ahmann (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1963), 66 and 69.

¹⁵ BT Sotah 14a.

¹⁶ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 109.

¹⁷ Gabriel Marcel, “Sketch of a Phenomenology and A Metaphysic of Hope,” in *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 51-52.

¹⁸ *MRI*, vol. 1, p. 234.

¹⁹ Quoted in Byron L. Sherwin, *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century: Living in the Image of God* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 5. For the words of Nahman of Breslov, see *Likutei Moharan* (Jerusalem: Aharon ben Moshe David/Chasidei Breslov, 1975), <https://www.hebrewbooks.org/34314>, BI. This work actually includes two volumes, the second of which, *Tenina Torah*, contains the source in question on page 9b, left column. The interpretation derives from the fact that Gen. 1:26 uses the word *kid'muteinu*, “in our likeness,” which contains the same root as *lidmot*, “to imagine.”

²⁰ Tanchuma 2:4, Gen. 6:9-11, part 4, 34. See John T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanhuma: Genesis* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989). The prooftext for the midrash depends on a dramatic re-reading of Gen. 8:21 “...the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Instead of *yetzer*, inclination, the midrash read the word as *yatzar*, He (God) created man’s heart evil...”. In rabbinic literature, leaven often has a negative connotation. See, e.g., BT Berakhot 17a, in which it is said that leaven in the dough prevents us from doing God’s will. The implication is that just as leaven causes fermentation in dough, it causes a souring in the human heart.

²¹ Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 250.

²² Gen. Rabbah 30:5 asserts that Noah not only provided comfort to his parents but to “celestial beings” as well.

²³ For more on this, see Paul Ohana and David Arnou, *Leadership in the Bible: A Practical Guide for Today* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2014), ch.14.

²⁴ This translation follows William H. C. Propp, *The Anchor Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999) and Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004). Each of these sources includes extensive discussion of the translation.

²⁵ Buber translates *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* as “I shall be there as whom [or: however] I shall be there.” He goes on to comment that the name itself speaks against despair: “God will be there, but He reserves to His will the manner and the action of his presence at any given time. You, my people need not despair, God announces to Israel for I am with you.” Martin Buber, *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 83.

²⁶ Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism, and Israel in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2009), 249-250, Kindle.