Everything that was created during the six days of creation has a partner. Light was given darkness and together the two of them share the important task of waking up the sun and the moon. Likewise the sun was given the moon as its partner and they trade places in the sky dictating when we sleep and when we work. For its part sky was given stars to float in its vast expanse providing direction for the traveller, but without sky as its partner, stars would have no place to hang. Land and sea were both very ambitious, so they were made each other's partner, each serving as a barrier to the other, preventing their inherent desires to encroach upon the other's space. The plants were given animals as their partner, and together they both give purpose to land and sea, helping to make the works of creation beautiful and meaningful. When the sixth day of creation was drawing to a close, God created human beings, realizing that everthing esle had a partner the human beings looked around, much like the last player chosen in a school yard game and asked, "Who will be our partner?". God turned to them and said, "I shall be your partner, I created you in my image and you will help me finish the work of creation. To this, the human being responded, "But God, creation is complete. What else needs to be done?" God explained that the world was created out of chaos, and it would return to chaos unless it had someone to rule over it, to subdue it, to maintain order. God said, "I have done that for the first six days and now you will do it in all the day to come, you will prevent chaos from re-appearing. Hearing this, human beings began to argue amongst themselves.

The first line, in the first chapter in the first book of the Torah tells us that when God created the universe, God created it out of tohu v'vohu, utter and complete chaos. Nothing worked, there was no law of nature, no moral law, no sense of order. But

through the miracle of creation God established order; step-by-step, day-by-day. God took the cluttered, jumbled mess of the world and made sense out of it. If we take just a moment to contemplate our environment, the vast detail and complexity that is involved in making it work even for just one day, we realize that within the natural world, among plants and animals, rivers and mountains, sky and stars there is almost no remnant of the disorder, or chaos, that existed before. The act of creation was so complete and so well planned-out that almost everything works -- that is, everything except humans. We are the one remnant of chaos and discord that still exists in the world. We can't seem to get along. We go to war with each other, we starve each other, we destroy not only the works of our own hands, but in our rainforests and oceans we destroy God's creations as well. Sadly, we who were created in the image of God, as God's partner in creation, are not the symbol of all that is right with the world, but rather the cause of much of the world's problems. Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "The divine symbolism of man is not in what he ***has*** -- such as reason or power of speech -- but in what he ***is***, potentially.[1]" Potentially, we have the ability to be God-like, to show mercy as God shows mercy, to do acts of loving kindness as God has done, to rule over the earth with wisdom and sensitivity as exemplified by God. We were charged with the divine task of subduing chaos, of finishing creation. We were created by God to prevent war and violence, to protect the environment, to make order out of disarray, to ensure that the miracle of creation that God began, would not revert back to the chaos and disorder from which the world was created from.

1 Heschel, "Quest for God"p. 126

Gunther Plaut explains, that "The role of humans was to assist the Creator in perfecting the world, in this way we become God's co-worker, and complete the act of creation God had begun."[2]

But we have not been so God-like in our role as partner in creation. Our world, which was given to us in fine working order, we have disassembled to the point that we fear the sun, can't breathe the air, and our seas are so poluted that we shouldn't even think of swimming in them. And is there anything more chaotic in our society than racial and sexist hatred? God gave us one specific instruction on the day of our creation: we were commanded to get along, to never view our fellow as being anything more or less than we ourselves are. That is why, the Mishnah tells us, we were created from one single set of parents, so that we could never say to a fellow human being, "My father was greater than yours."[3] But we have done just the opposite, we have failed to work out our own differences. In fact, we have failed to see anything *but* our differences -- of color, race, religion, or creed. We have allowed a person's ***outward*** appearance to dictate how we treat the ***inner*** soul; and our ***inner soul*** is the one thing that we all share in common, the one thing that binds us eternally and divinely to each other, because inside each of us is the divine spark, the image of God.

A Midrash explains that on the sixth day, when God began to create human beings in God's own image the angels who had been ministering to God through all of the previous creations complained amongst themselves. They said one to another, "Should mere mortals be so gifted as to be endowed with the Divine image?" "No,"

2 Plautt Commentary

3 Leibowitz

they said, "This is not right. We should hide the divine image from humans." One of the angels suggested hiding it in the sea, reasoning that the sea was so deep surely humans would never find it there. Still another suggested hiding it at the top of the highest mountain, close to heaven where the angels could keep an eye on it. But the shrewdest angel dismissed their plans. "The human being", the angel said, "is ambitious, and will search high and low to find such a treasure. Let us hide it within the soul of every human being. It is the *last* place in the world a human would think to look."[4]

The chaos that persists in the world, persists not because we don't see each other as human, but because we have failed to look for the divine image in ourselves and in each other. But how can we find the divine image of God that the angels hid from us? How can we see past our outward appearance, and find that divine spark that lies within? We can start by looking in the mirror. Recognizing in our own reflection not our physical attributes, the fact that our hair is brown, or blonde, our eyes, blue or green. But the fact that we have eyes and we have hair, that we have arms, and legs, fingers and toes. These are not things that make us different, but rather affirm that in so many ways we are all similar. When we look in the mirror and marvel not at the fact that we are tall or short, large or skinny, but instead marvel simply at the fact that we are, that we exist, that all of the complex systems in our body were created so we could stand here at this moment and see past own reflection, and recognize the divine image in whose likeness we were created. It is when we do this, when we see ourselves as God see each of us, as a blessing and a divine gift, as a true miracle of creation, it is then

4 Shulweis, For Those Who Can't Believe

that we find the treasure the angels hid from us. And once we recognize it in ourselves, then our task is to search for that image of God, that treasure in others; this is true even when the people we interact with, act in ways that are far less than God like, far less than divine. It is not easy to see a criminal as a symbol of God, it is not easy to see God's image in the person who cut you off on the freeway, or the politician who wants to do away with your civil liberties. But they too are God's creation, they too possess deep inside of them the very essence of God, our task, is to help them find it, and we do that best when we ourselves act in Godly ways, when we oursleves strive to embody the blessing of our creation.

In Pirkei Avoth we read, "Beloved is the person for he was created in the image of God. Still greater was God's love in that God gave people the knowledge of having been so created."[5] From this idea, that all human beings were created in the divine image of God, can flow all of our actions and interactions with one another. The responsibility that comes with being created *B'etzelem Elohim*, in the image of God, is that we symbolize God, we are God's role-model in the world and because of that reality we are responsible for what happens. We are not only our brother's keeper in answer to Cain's question, but we are keepers of all the works of creation; and as the Torah commands, we must be holy in our dealings with one another.

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"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

As teachers of Judaism, we are constantly looking for ways to apply the lessons of Torah to our communities, our professional and personal lives. The story of creation gives one very important application. We are reminded not only that we were created in the divine image, but so was everybody else. When we fail to see that, when we fail to recognize and preserve the likeness of God in ourselves, and when we fail to prevent

5 Pirkei Avoth 3:18

its distortion in others, we cease being God's partner, and become the very chaos we were instructed to subdue. Let us go home and look in the mirror, let us struggle to see there not only our reflection, but the divine image of God looking back at us. Then let us turn outward to the people we interact with everyday and finish the work of creation by eliminating that very last remnant of chaos in the world, the chaos that exists between each of us; and in doing so may we find the image of God hidden inside every soul.