

Tzelem Elohim

Good morning - L'Shana Tova

“And God created the human beings in [the divine] image, creating [them] in the image of God (*betzelem elohim*), creating them male and female”

I have read this before. And I have heard it many times. Yet, the first thought that came to mind when I sat to think about this was - very literal - does god look like me? *DO I* - look like god?

Probably not.

OK...so, is there a practical way of looking at this? How does this image business pertain to me? Was I really created in the image of god?

I tend to think of myself as a meat and potatoes kind of guy - it is very difficult for me to swallow the creationism pill without choking a bit. So one of the views that caught my attention while I read about this, seemed like a somewhat reasonable argument since it is pretty straightforward.

The view is that the Divine Image manifests in humans via intellect. God as an intellectual seems reasonable enough. We were created in god's intellectual image.

I *guess*... We do have the ability to think things through — to examine, to explore...to reason...to choose...

But is our intellect truly developed enough to be considered divine? After all - would god be average in intellect? Or would god be an intellectual genius? Most of us would probably consider god being a super intellectual genius to the infinite power.

And I am going to venture - and I'll make a very general statement here - that WE (humans) are NOT ALL intellectual geniuses. I can't speak for you - but I *confess* - I am very far from being a genius. And sometimes even from being rational (jennifer and my kids can attest to that). So, how can I be the image of god? How can god "create" me and not make me the "genius" that god is?

Perhaps I am looking at this correctly in that we are not created as a reflection in physical appearance, but maybe I am approaching this from the wrong angle.

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There is this simple mantra I've carried with me since I was a little boy - (and I can't remember where it came from or why it stuck with me):

Strive for perfection even if it is impossible to attain.

I know- I know. that is a tall order. An *Impossible goal...*

But it makes sense - at least to me. If we aim for perfection, even if perfection is never attainable, we might, **just might** - come as close to it as we possibly can. AND **in the end** - we will end at a place much much further than we would have had - had we not tried.

I am not so sure that I am, or may ever be the spit image of god - whatever that may be. But I know that I can strive towards a goal even if it might seem impossible for me to reach.

Maybe this is the idea behind the passage — created in “god’s” image. Obviously not in our physical appearance, **BUT** - more in our active, never ending effort — of becoming a good human being... a good son, a good brother, a good husband, a good father, a good friend...

AND - perhaps - It *is* **divine** that we have been given the ability to engage in the act of examining, choosing...reaching - through the observance of *Torah and Mitzvot*. Even if we stumble and fail along the way - and don't reach the ultimate goal.