

Excerpts from Genesis Rabbah for “The Genesis of Gender”

from CHAPTER XVII

8. R. Joshua was asked: 'Why does a man come forth [at birth] with his face downward, while a woman comes forth with her face turned upwards?' 'The man looks towards the place of his creation [viz. the earth], while the woman looks towards the place of her creation [viz. the rib]/ he replied. 'And why must a woman use perfume, while a man does not need perfume?' 'Man was created from earth/ he answered, 'and earth never putrefies, but Eve was created from a bone. For example : if you leave meat three days unsalted, it immediately goes putrid/ 'And why has a woman a penetrating [shrill] voice, but not a man?' 'I will give you an illustration,' replied he. 'If you fill a pot with meat it does not make any sound, but when you put a bone into it, the sound [of sizzling] spreads immediately.' 'And why is a man easily appeased, but not a woman?' 'Man was created from the earth,' 3 he answered, 'and when you pour a drop of water on it, it immediately absorbs it 4 ; but Eve was created from a bone, which even if you soak many days in water does not become saturated.' 'And why does the man make demands upon the woman, whereas the woman does not make demands upon the man?' 'This may be compared to a man who loses something/ replied he ; 'he seeks what he lost, but the lost article does not seek him/ ' And why does a man deposit sperm within a woman while a woman does not deposit sperm within a man ? ' [He replied] : ' It is like a man who has an article in his hand and seeks a trustworthy person with whom he may deposit it.' 1 'Why does a man go out bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head covered?' 'She is like one who has done wrong and is ashamed of people; therefore she goes out with her head covered.' 'Why do they [the women] walk in front of the corpse [at a funeral]?' 2 'Because they brought death into the world, they therefore walk in front of the corpse, [as it is written], For he is borne to the grave . . . and all men draw after him, as there were innumerable before him' (Job xxi, 32 f). 3 'And why was the precept of menstruation given to her?' 'Because she shed the blood of Adam [by causing death], therefore was the precept of menstruation given to her.' 'And why was the precept of "dough" 4 given to her ? ' ' Because she corrupted Adam, who was the dough (hallah) of the world, 5 therefore was the precept of dough given to her.' 'And why was the precept of the Sabbath lights given to her?' 'Because she extinguished the soul of Adam, 6 therefore was the precept of the Sabbath lights given to her/ NO HEBREW

Chapter XVIII

1. And the Lord God built (wayyiben) the rib, etc. (n, 22). R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: She was endowed with more understanding (binah) than a man. 1 For we learned elsewhere : The vows of an eleven-year-old maiden are subject to examination 2 ; those of a twelve-year-old maiden are valid, 3 and we examine her in the whole of the twelfth year. The vows of a twelve-year-old youth are subject to examination; those of a thirteen-year-old youth are valid, and we examine him in the whole of the thirteenth year. 4 R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac: Some reverse it, because a woman generally stays at home, whereas a man goes out into the streets and learns understanding from people. R. Aibu â€” others state the following in R. Bannayah's name, and it was also taught in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai â€” said: He [God] adorned her like a bride and brought her to Him, for there are places where coiffure is called building.