

Excerpts from Chapter 1, “The Genesis of Gender”

Joy Ladin, *The Soul of the Stranger: Reading God and Torah from a Transgender Perspective*

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from **The Birth of the Binary**

Like many transgender people, I have spent my entire life on the look-out for signs of gender. To me, gender is everywhere in the human world, stamped on every face and figure, shouting from ads, singing pop songs, starring in every show.

But when I read the first chapter of Genesis, other than the gendered verbs and pronouns required by Biblical Hebrew, gender isn't there. God creates light and dark, day and night, sky and earth, sun and moon, seas and stars, animals and plants, without referring to maleness or femaleness. That's why it's so striking when we are told that God created human beings “male and female”:

And God said, “Let us make [humanity] in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” So God created [humanity] in God's own image, in the image of God God created [them]; male and female God created them.<sup>1</sup> (Gen. 1:26-27)

This is the first time Genesis distinguishes between male and female, and it seems to suggest that that division (a trait our species shares with many others) is a defining mark of humanity.

But there is no sign here or in the rest of this chapter that “male and female” carry the social, psychological or other meanings we call “gender.” Gender doesn't merely distinguish between male

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word I am translating as “humanity” is *adam*. *Adam* means “earth,” “man,” and humanity in general, and, as I will discuss below, becomes the first man's name. But this translation smooths over a complication: as rabbinic readers noticed, Gen. 1:27 can be read as saying that God created *adam*, the first human being, both male and female, as an androgyne. (See for example Genesis Rabbah 8: 1-2.) If we read the verse this way, the first chapter of Genesis not only fails to mention gender, but even presents humanity as being created without the division into male and female on which binary gender is based.

and female bodies; it gives this difference meaning, assigning different roles and characteristics to people with male and female bodies. At this point in creation, neither God nor the Torah treat males and females differently. Both are “created in the image of God,” and in the verses that immediately follow, God blesses and instructs humanity without distinguishing one from another:

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every seed-bearing plant ... and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food.” (Gen. 1:28-29)

Here, God addresses all human beings in the same terms, without distinguishing males from females: all humans are created in God's image, rule over other creatures, and are ordered to be vegetarians. As far as God is concerned – and God's perspective is the only one the text offers – differences in physical sex here have none of the meaning (assignment of different roles, characteristics, feelings, desires, earning capacity, authority, and so on, to males and females) that marks the presence of gender.

But by specifically mentioning that humanity is created male and female – by singling out that difference among all human physical variations – Genesis I lays the foundation for the gender binary. Actually, the first stone of the gender binary was laid at the beginning of creation, when God, distinguishing light from darkness, creates the first binary:

When God began to create heaven and earth – the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water – God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, a first day. (Gen. 1: 1-5)

To most people, the idea that light and darkness are not only different from one another but are binary opposites that are mutually exclusive seems obvious: what's light isn't dark, and where darkness is present light is not. But according to the second verse of Genesis, darkness existed before light, and when, in verse 3, God says, “Let there be light,” light is created as an independent entity, without regard to the darkness that preceded its creation. At this point, as rabbinic commentators noted, light

and darkness have not yet become opposites, or even separate (since God hasn't yet separated them).<sup>2</sup> As a result, when God says that “the light was good,” it doesn't imply that the darkness was bad, any more than it implies that “the deep” on which the darkness rested was bad. But when God separates light from darkness, light and darkness become binary categories. From here on, light and darkness are mutually exclusive: where there is light, there is no darkness, and vice versa.

Like the creation of human beings male and female, the light/darkness binary refers to a purely physical distinction, without symbolic or other meanings. But as we see in verse 5, once physical reality is divided into categories, those categories tend to be associated with other binaries that *do* give them symbolic meanings. When “God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night,” God associates the light/darkness with the day/night binary, turning a way of distinguishing degrees of illumination into a way of describing the human experience of time.

To most of us, it seems natural to associate light with day and darkness with night. But though day is usually lighter and night is usually darker, people who live near the poles often experience days of darkness and nights of light. Nonetheless, we still call those days “days” and those nights “nights.” That's the power of binaries. They organize reality so effectively that they tend to seem like built-in features of existence rather than human interpretations of it.

Genesis 1 moves on after associating light and darkness with day and night, but most cultures pile on many more binary associations. For example, since light enables us to see, and seeing is associating with knowing, light is often associated with understanding and darkness with ignorance. Similarly, since being able to see makes us feel safe and being unable to see frightens us, light is often

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the Ikar Sifte Hachamim on verse 4: “[A]ccording to the simple understanding of the text, it is implied that at first they [light and darkness] were mixed together as one...” (Ikar Sifte Hachamim Gen 1:4). Similarly, Rashi explains God's division of light from darkness by saying, “[God] saw that [the light] was good, and that it was not seemly that light and darkness should function together in a confused manner” (Rashi Gen 1:4 (DH – And God saw)).

associated with goodness and darkness with evil. Associations like these expand the physical distinction between light and darkness into a complex web of symbols and metaphors.

But even the binary light/darkness interprets rather than describes reality. From a scientific perspective, “light” is a vague term that refers to the part of the electromagnetic spectrum visible to human eyes; “darkness” has no scientific meaning at all. The binary light/darkness reduces the complexity of reality into simple either/or terms that are easy to use and understand. If Genesis were written in the language of science, the statement “And God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night” would read something like this:

And God called the period of time when the yet-uncreated human residents of the yet-uncreated planet not yet called `Earth' would generally perceive the greatest amount of visible electromagnetic radiation `Day,' and the period of time when they would generally perceive the least amount of visible electromagnetic radiation `Night.'

If Genesis had avoided binaries in favor of precise physical descriptions, the Bible would never have become a best seller.

Binaries aren't accurate, but they are appealing. In fact, their inaccuracy is what makes them so appealing. They make it easy to organize and describe messy, complicated realities, and they even sound good, lending themselves to the kind of rhythmic, tick-tock parallelism that can make Biblical proverbs and political rhetoric so effective: “You're either with us or against us,” “There is right, and there is wrong,” “The situation is black and white,” and so on.

My favorite example of the power of binaries is the genre of jokes that begin, “There are two kinds of people in this world...,” which make fun of the way binaries – gender binary, I'm looking at you – claim to account for all of humanity in a few simple words. For example, “There are two kinds of people in this world: people who believe there are two kinds of people in this world, and people who don't.” Most of us, including me, are both. We know there are as many kinds of people in this world as there are people – seven billion and counting – and we often rely on binary categories to quickly and

easily describe them.

### From **Gender and Loneliness**

No binary is more powerful than the gender binary, which has been used to interpret everything from personal tastes to the structure of the universe, and has defined so many lives that Sigmund Freud famously said “Biology” (being born male or female) “is destiny.”

As we saw above, the male/female binary introduced in Genesis 1 refers to physical sex, not gender, but it is not surprising that this, and only this, aspect of human bodies is mentioned. Binary gender – by which I mean any system that gives social or other meaning to the difference between male and female bodies – is a fundamental feature of every culture know of. I'm not suggesting that any particular version of binary gender is universal, hard-wired into our brains and souls, or even stable. I have seen enormous changes in what people think it means to be a woman or a man just over the course of my lifetime, and whenever I walk along a crowded street, I see many individual and cultural variations in how people express maleness and femaleness. But almost everywhere I look, I see people acting in ways that reflect the influence of binary gender.

Just as the light/darkness binary drastically oversimplifies the nature of electromagnetic radiation, every version of the gender binary drastically oversimplifies the nature of humanity. As Joanne Meyerowitz describes in her history of transsexuality, even in the early twentieth century, scientists noted that

[i]n its earliest stages the human embryo did not manifest its sex, and in its later development its sexual differentiation remained partial. The similarities of male and female reproductive organs seems to reveal their common origins: testis resembled ovary, and penis resembled clitoris. All males maintained vestiges of the female, and all females, vestiges of the male. Men had nipples and rudimentary breasts. The embryonic Müllerian duct, which developed into fallopian tubes, uterus, and vagina in woman, remained undeveloped in the man, and the Wolffian body and duct, which developed into the vas deferens, seminal vesicle, and epididymis in the man,

remained undeveloped in the woman.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, even bodies that fit physical norms of maleness or femaleness don't fit the male/female binary, because the binary implies that when it comes to sex-related organs, male and female bodies completely different. Like light and darkness before God separated them, physical maleness and femaleness are not mutually exclusive; all bodies include aspects of both.<sup>4</sup>

When we turn from physical sex to gender, the mismatch between the simplicity of the male/female binary categories and the complexity of human beings becomes even clearer. No matter what we believe it means to be male or female, few if any of us always and only fit those definitions. Even people who are not transgender feel or want things that binary gender categories tell us we shouldn't, and do things we are told we can't or shouldn't do.

But if binary gender categories fit humanity so badly, why do most people in most times and places insist on defining ourselves as male or female?

For me, the answer is simple: however poorly binary gender categories may fit me (and when I was living as a male I knew I wasn't, they fit me very poorly indeed), being seen as male or female is better than being alone. I grew up terrified that if those around me – my family, my teachers, my friends – knew that I wasn't really the boy they thought I was, they would shun me, exile me from home, school and community. And I was right to be afraid. Even today, transgender kids make up a disproportionate share of homeless youth.

My fear of being alone was so great that for over forty years, I did daily violence to myself in order to fit the male identity I was assigned when the nurse who delivered me said “It's a boy.” It hurt to live as a man, but I knew that if I didn't, instead of being loved as a son, a husband, or a father, I

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3 Joanne Myerowitz. *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002. 23.

4 Of course, as the Talmud acknowledged, as the rabbis acknowledge with such categories as the “androgynus,” seen above in Genesis Rabbah 8:1, some human bodies don't fit male and female norms, though this fact obscured by modern medicine's penchant for surgically “correcting” the genitals of intersex newborns, a Western form of genital mutilation that attests to our profound, sometimes violent determination to make reality fit binary categories.

would be seen as something monstrously, unlovably other. Maleness was a mask that hid who I knew myself to be, but it was a mask that enabled others to recognize me as human. Even the suicidal despair to which living as a man drove me seemed better than being alone.

The Torah doesn't talk about how it feels to be transgender, but it does speak to the longing to be known and loved that drove me to live so long as a man. In fact, according to the second chapter of Genesis, that is why gender was created: so human beings would not feel alone.

In chapter 1, humanity is created collectively, but in chapter 2, the creation of humanity begins with the creation of a single person, Adam:

[T]he LORD God formed man from the dust from the earth. [God] blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7)

As in the first chapter, humanity here is created with sex (as the term “man” suggests, Adam is physically male), but not with gender. Gender is a system for giving meaning to the differences between male and female bodies, and at this point, there are no differences. Adam is the only one of his kind.

God gives Adam a home, a place to live – the Garden of Eden – and a purpose for living (taking care of the Garden [2:15]). God even gives him a law to keep – the famous prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The man has a body, a soul, a home, work, food to eat, a relationship with God and the beginning of morality, but he is not yet fully human, because though some of us enjoy living in solitude, as a species, human beings are social animals. As God reflects in verse 18, “It is not good for man to be alone.”

And the man is very, very alone. In Genesis 1, humanity is created after all the other creatures, but in this chapter, Adam is created first – he's the only living thing on Earth other than vegetation. In an effort to give him companionship, God “form[s] out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky” and parades them before Adam (2:19). Adam names the creatures, but, even though they,

like him, were formed from the earth, he doesn't recognize any of them as the “fitting helper” – literally, “the helper who is his opposite” – he longs for (2:20). Finally, God gets it: Adam needs a creature whose body is akin to his own. That is why, instead of forming the woman from the earth, God forms her from Adam's body: so the man will see the woman as fundamentally like him, and no longer feel alone:

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep upon the man, and he slept; and, while he slept, [God] took one of his ribs... And the LORD God fashioned the rib that [God] had taken from the man into a woman; and [God] brought her to the man. Then the man said,

This one at last

Is bone of my bones

And flesh of my flesh.

This one shall be called Woman,

For from man was she taken.

Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh.

(Gen. 2:21-23)

As in Genesis 1:27, humanity here is created male and female, and as in the first chapter, in this story, the difference between male and female bodies is much less important than what human beings have in common. Those physical differences would surely have been striking to a man who had never seen a human body other than his own, but Adam (“the man”) notices first the woman's physical kinship to him, the shared humanity he didn't find in other creatures: “This one at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”

That recognition of common humanity inspires Adam to invent gender, that is, to interpret the differences between male and female bodies as implying different but intimately related identities: “This one shall be called Woman, for from man was she taken.” This moment, when Adam begins to give human meaning to divinely created (but thus far not divinely interpreted) maleness and

femaleness, represents the Biblical genesis of gender, and the first budding of the gender binary.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, the gender binary is not concerned with sexual desire, reproduction, or male privilege; it is a means of naming the differences between the man and the woman in ways that emphasize their kinship. Of course, in Adam's (and Genesis's) male-centered account, it is the man who does the naming, and the woman who, according to Adam, is defined in relationship to man, “for from man was she taken.”

But Adam's gender binary not only defines the woman; it also defines him. Before the woman was created, “man” was a unique term for a unique being. The binary man/woman demotes Adam from a supreme, species-defining individual to someone who is defined in relation to the woman, just as the woman is defined in relation to him.

Adam doesn't mind the demotion; in fact, he is delighted, because being defined by the gender binary means he is no longer alone. Even though he and the woman are the only human beings in the universe, Adam's invention of the gender binary leads immediately to a vision of a future filled with gender-based relationships that affirm that despite their differences, men and women are, in the end, “one flesh”: “Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh” (Gen. 2: 24). In this vision, the gender binary is the root from which not just romantic relationships and family but human history, imagined here as a series of conflicts between loyalty to parents and heterosexual attachments, grows. To express gender's rapidly expanding significance, the

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5 Though I developed my reading years before I came across Phyllis Trible's groundbreaking work, this reading of what I call the genesis of gender has striking parallels to Trible's efforts to “depatriarchalize” Genesis's account of the creation of humanity. While Trible's focus is different than mine (her concern is showing that this account should not be read as implying that God created men to be dominant and women to be subordinate), her reading and mine agree on several key points, particularly the idea that gender as we know it emerges gradually in chapters 2 and 3, and that patriarchy – a binary gender system based on male dominance – is portrayed as a divine curse (punishment for eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) rather than as a built-in feature of humanity. See “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 41.1 (Mar., 1973): 30-48; and “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread.” In *Womanspirit Rising: a Feminist Reader in Religion*. Ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992. 74-83.

Torah adds two new binaries, “father/mother” and “husband/wife,” to the original association of male/female and man/woman.<sup>6</sup>

Adam's enthusiastic response to the woman suggests many of the benefits we receive from binary gender. When we define ourselves as men and women rather than as unique individuals, we, like Adam, know we are not alone: the gender binary defines everyone with a male or female body as being like, essentially similar to, half the human race, and offers us a variety of roles (mother, father, husband, wife, son, daughter, boyfriend, girlfriend, and so on) that relate us to those in the other half.

But despite Adam's enthusiasm about the gender binary, there are already signs of trouble in Paradise. As feminist critics have long pointed out, though humanity is created equally male and female in chapter 1, chapter 2 is all about the man: God forms Adam first, designs the garden for him, creates the animals for his benefit and invites him to name them. Only then, to relieve the man's isolation, does God create the woman. Though Adam and the woman presumably saw one another simultaneously, the story tells us only about Adam's response to seeing her, not her response to seeing him. (The woman, as they say, is seen and not heard.) In short, the creation of humanity is presented as a story about a man, his needs, and a woman who is literally created to fulfill them – a bias that the Torah presents as continuing into the future it describes as consisting of men leaving their parents for their wives.

But even though Adam and the Torah present it from a male perspective, gender here is a means of defining personal and family relationships, not a patriarchal system that is based on male dominance or female submission. As Phyllis Trible points out, in chapter 2, neither God nor Adam say anything that identifies the gender binary with male dominance or female submission;<sup>7</sup> even Adam's male-centered vision of a gendered future, which focuses on the drama of men leaving their parents for their

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6        Though this verse doesn't say “husband,” it is implied by the term “wife” (literally, “his woman”) since a heterosexual man (the only kind envisioned here) cannot have a wife without being a husband (that is, without being his woman's man).

7        “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” 38.

wives, ends on an egalitarian note, with husband and wife becoming “one flesh.”

But whatever its virtues may have been, this Edenic vision of gender is lost, along with Eden itself, in chapter 3, when God responds to the eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by cursing the man and the woman in terms that transform binary gender into an engine of inequality:

And to the woman [God] said,  
“I will make most severe  
Your pangs in child-bearing;  
In pain shall you bear children.  
Yet your urge shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you.”

To Adam [God] said, “Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you, `You shall not eat of it,'

Cursed be the ground because of you;  
By toil shall you eat of it  
All the days of your life....  
By the sweat of your brow  
Shall you get bread to eat... (Gen. 3:16-17)

God's punishments magnify the consequences of being male and being female, decreeing that the woman is to be ruled by the man and burdened by childbirth, while the man is to toil for food. These curses transform binary gender from a means of establishing intimate relationships into a system of oppression, in which social roles, privilege and power are unequally divided on the basis of maleness and femaleness.

Even here, at the mythic dawn of patriarchy, Genesis hints that there could and should be a better form of gender. God presents patriarchy as a curse on men as well as women.<sup>8</sup> And though patriarchy is the final step in the Biblical genesis of gender, it is presented not as an inevitable

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<sup>8</sup> According to the curse, and to many definitions of male social roles, Adam has to work for bread whether he wants to or not – and Adam, like many men, clearly doesn't want to do the work he is now required to do. If he did want to, God wouldn't assign that work as punishment.

outgrowth of inherent differences between males and females, but the unforeseen, tragic consequence of human violation of God's command – in Christian terms, of original sin. Had the woman and the man not eaten the fruit, the story implies, gender would never have become patriarchal.

But these are hints of a paradise that certainly was lost. Though the gender binary has taken innumerable forms, most fulfill the Biblical curse of patriarchy all too well. And while it is generally better to rule than to be ruled over, as the Biblical curse suggests, men as well as women suffer from patriarchal forms of the gender binary that turn biology, the physical difference between male and female bodies, into social destiny. From this perspective, the patriarchal form of gender we see in most of the Torah, in which women are defined primarily as mothers and are ruled over by men who are responsible for providing food for the family, is not a sign not of God's original intentions for humanity but a curse humanity continues to endure.

### From **Genesis and Transgender Identities**

Religious traditionalists often point to the version of gender we see in the Garden of Eden as representing God's idea of what human beings are and should be. That's the assumption behind statements like “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve,” which suggest that because Adam and Eve were heterosexual, all people should be heterosexual. But the version of the gender binary we see in the opening chapters of Genesis doesn't only leave out gay people; it leaves out most kinds of people. This is a gender binary built for two. Adam and Eve seem to have been created as adults and they have not yet had children, so there are no sisters or brothers, best male or female friends, grandmothers or grandfathers, or, for that matter, girls or boys. Clearly, this version of the gender binary is not meant to define all, or even most, of humanity.

In most of the Torah, as in our lives today, gender is a complicated system that shapes family life, social roles, laws and rituals, politics, morality (men and women are judged by different

standards), and even the ways in which the Torah describes God. But the version of gender we see at the end of the third chapter of Genesis is still quite simple. Since there are only two human beings in the world, maleness and femaleness don't yet have symbolic significance. When God curses Adam and Eve, the curses represent practical punishments for their actions, not statements about the moral or spiritual qualities of males and females. At this point, gender serves only three purposes: it ensures that, despite their differences, male and female bodies are recognized as akin to one another, bone of the same bone, flesh of one human flesh; it fosters family connections by giving males and females roles (mother/father, husband/wife) that relate them to one another; and, in the curses, it assigns males and females different levels of authority and different kinds of work.

But even in this simple form, the gender binary we see at the end of chapter 3 is still a binary. It assumes that all human beings will be either and always male or female, men or women. Mothers will never be fathers, husbands will never become wives. There is no room in this or any version of the gender binary for people like me, people who are not simply male or female, people for whom gender is not defined by physical sex.

Though the version of gender that emerges by the end of the first three chapters of Genesis does not speak to people who don't fit binary categories, the story of the genesis of gender does. Adam is human before he is gendered; his humanity does not depend on him fitting into a binary gender system, on being a man as opposed to a woman. The Torah presents gender not as a built-in aspect of humanity decreed by God, but as a human creation, born out of Adam's response to Eve. As new and startling as transgender identities can seem, in this regard they are direct descendants of the Biblical genesis of gender: like Adam's woman/man binary, transgender identities are human inventions, attempts to understand and express who we are in relation to others, so that we will not feel alone.

But Adam invents gender as a way of recognizing that the woman, despite her physical difference from the man, are kin to one another. To be openly transgender means being seen as

someone whose differences can't be understood in terms of binary gender – and, all too often, that means not being seen as “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,” but as incomprehensibly other. Some transgender people enjoy being what Kate Bornstein calls “gender outlaws”; some of us find friends and family, partners and communities, who love us despite, or because, of our otherness.<sup>9</sup> But for too many of us, being seen as transgender means exile from family and community, loss of housing and employment, verbal and physical abuse, isolation, suicide or murder.

As a culture, we are still working to develop an understanding of what it means to be transgender, of how transgender identities relate us to as well as distinguish us from people who fit into binary gender categories. The increasing visibility of transgender people means that, like it or not, we are all engaged in the process of figuring out how recognizing that some people are not simply male or female changes our understanding of gender. I spent most of my life in hiding, but now transgender people run for public office, are interviewed on news programs, publish books and essays, appear on TV shows and in movies, are subjects of political speeches and Supreme Court cases. Many religious denominations now have openly transgender clergy, and some have developed prayers and rituals specifically for transgender people. More and more institutions and facilities include restrooms, policies and accommodations designed with transgender people in mind. Even in communities that don't accept transgender identities as valid, transgender people discussed and debated. And though it may be decades before such debates are settled, the widespread recognition that there are people who are not simply male or female is slowly, spottily, but profoundly transforming our understanding of gender, and thus of what it means to be human.

The ideas that gender is a human invention and that gender can change may seem startlingly new, but they are there in the opening chapters of Genesis. Adam's version of gender consists of a single binary, man and woman. But in the verse that follows his response to first seeing Eve, gender is

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<sup>9</sup> See Kate Bornstein. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. NY: Vintage (Reprint edition), 1995.

transformed, as the Torah expands the gender binary to include the mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, who will populate the future. When God curses Adam and Eve, gender once more changes before our eyes. The Torah does not envision transgender identities, but the idea that gender can not only change but change radically, in a single generation, is at the heart of the Biblical genesis of gender.

Above all, Genesis lays the ground for accepting people who don't fit binary gender categories by reminding us that people don't have to be gendered to be human. As we saw, when God creates human beings at the end of Genesis 1, they are created without gender, because the differences between male and female bodies have not yet been given meaning; in the second creation story in Genesis 2, humanity is again created without gender, because God at first only created Adam, who, because he is unique, cannot have a gender.

By showing us that we do not need gender to be human, the Torah not only offers a basis for acceptance of the humanity of transgender people; it also frees us recognize the ways in which non-transgender people do not fit binary gender categories, to notice that there are women who have facial hair and men who don't, women without breast tissue and men with plenty, women who are over six feet tall and men who are under five feet, women who don't have uteruses and men who don't have testicles, women with low voices and men with high voices. When we remember that, as the first two chapters of Genesis show, our humanity does not depend on gender, we can acknowledge, without fear or shame, the aspects of ourselves that don't fit the gender to which we have been assigned, and the ways in which thinking of ourselves as only and always male or female limits our understanding of who we are and what we can be. In this sense, the Biblical account of the genesis of gender lays the ground for accepting the dazzling variety not just of transgender people, but of humanity.