

In this week's Torah portion, we read of the story of creation. Amidst the details of this account there lies an incredibly important lesson and insight into human nature. The Torah tells us that when G-d created sea creatures, fish, animals, and birds none of them were created individually, they were created en masse. Their entire species were created as a unit and not as individual beings. Yet, man was created in a very different fashion. The verse (Genesis 1, 26) says "And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him". Man was not created as entire species; rather he was created alone to be the only man in the world. Why was man's creation different? Why was man not created in a wholesale manner like all of the other species?

The Mishnah in Sanhedrin explains that man was created individually to teach us that although each man was created in the image of Adam, yet no two people are exactly alike. Although every human being shares a general likeness, remarkably there are no two human beings that are exactly alike. It is for this reason, that fingerprints, retina scans, and even DNA testing are such conclusive forms of identification. Therefore, the creation of the human could not have been as general specie like the rest of G-D's creations.

More importantly than our physical dissimilarities are the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual differences that we share. The Mishnah tells us that every person must say "B'Shvili Nivra Ha'olam." This phrase is commonly understood as "For me the world was created." The Ba'al Shem Tov, the father of Hassidim explains that the word "B'shivili" can have a completely different meaning. A shvil is a path or a road. The Ba'al Shem Tov posits that perhaps the intention of the Talmud is that each and every individual should say, "For my path the world was created."

Each one of us has a specific job or chore that we were tasked to accomplish. For some it may be in the area of kindness, for others it may lie in Jewish scholarship, and still for others it may be in the areas of community leadership. Each of us were specifically endowed with unique talents and skills that will allow us to be successful in our individual chosen path, it is simply up to us to find out what that path is and where it might take us.

***Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Meir Tannenbaum***

