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"Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man?
Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?" (*Paradise Lost*. 1667. Book X, 743-45)

These are Adam's questions to God after losing paradise in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the epigraph to Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*. Remarkably, these lines also evoke differences between Genesis' two accounts of Adam's creation: In Genesis 2, Adam is formed from the dust of the earth (clay) and told to serve the Garden; in Genesis 1, he is told to dominate the earth. For Shelley, the fictional Adam's questions capture the essence of Victor Frankenstein and his Monster: Both ask why they were created and why they were bestowed with the intelligence to conquer nature on the one hand, and to suffer grievously for it on the other.

These contradictions, many will immediately recognize, are at the heart of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's *The Lonely Man of Faith* (1965). There, after interpreting the dual accounts of Adam's creation in Genesis 1 and 2, he laments what he perceives as Western man's "determin[ation] not to accept the dialectical burden of humanity" (Soloveitchik 97).[1] This burden, he argues, stems from humanity's double nature revealed in the contradictory descriptions of Adam's 'birth.'

That is, Adam I, created "in His own image," was told to "fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion… all over the earth," while Adam II, created from "the dust of the ground," was told to "serve [the Garden of Eden] and to keep it" (10). Even the creation of Eve differs in these two accounts. In Genesis 1, "Male and female were created concurrently, while Adam the second emerged alone, with Eve appearing subsequently as his helpmate" (11). These Adams then represent "a real contradiction in the nature of man" (10), which one must navigate by alternating between them.

In man's refusal to accept this 'burden,' the rabbi sees an imbalance between Adam I's desire for dominion at the expense of Adam II's desire for community and a relationship with God. Rabbi Soloveitchik even puts this imbalance in gothic terms: "Majestic Adam has developed a demonic quality; laying claim to unlimited power… His pride is almost boundless, his imagination arrogant, and he aspires to complete and absolute control of everything… [He] is bidding for unrestricted dominion" (97). Strikingly, these words also describe Frankenstein and his Monster.[2]

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[1] All references are to the Doubleday edition, 1992.

[2] The fact that Frankenstein has become his monster in the popular imagination accords with Shelley's novel. While this trope of doubling or divided selves is common to literature (e.g., Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear,* Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," and Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*), here it is also identified with Genesis.

In Shelley's novel, Frankenstein is the handsome Faust-like mad-scientist, who, driven by desire for glory, animates dead body parts, hoping to become the exalted father of a physically superior race of men. But when the creature comes to life, the ironically-named Victor (his success leads to multiple deaths) is horrified by its hideous appearance, and abandons it. This leaves the unnamed being, who yearns for community, piteously alone, so two years later, like the Adam he read about in *Paradise Lost*, the creature requests that his maker create an Eve. Only when Frankenstein refuses this request does his 'Adam' methodically murder everyone his creator loves.

While Victor believes the Monster is his evil spirit, the Monster believes he is Victor's Adam, entitled to all the love and support God gave to His Adam. Indeed, Shelly's intertwining of *Paradise Lost* throughout the novel evokes the original 'doubling' that the Rav develops.

Read in these terms, Shelley's Frankenstein and his Monster: 1) become magnified, distorted forms of the conquering, glory-seeking Adam I and the subservient, community-seeking Adam II; 2) demonstrate the tragic cost of Adam I's renunciation of Adam II's need for love; and 3) suggest that if we allow our Adam-I desire for achievement and glory to stamp out our Adam-II desire to serve and create community, we will lose everything we love, including all that we have achieved.

Consequently, as we will see, Frankenstein's inability (or refusal) to step out of his isolation, and integrate his Adam II self into his Adam I persona, costs him everything. Frankenstein shares Adam I's personality traits, his utilitarian attitude toward his 'Eve,' and evokes Job in terms of his losses and inability to pray for others. Conversely, The Monster shares Adam II's personality traits, his loving attitude toward his prospective Eve, and his desire for community.

Frankenstein, in other words, prefigures Rabbi Soloveitchik's ominous description of Adam I's isolation if he fails to embrace community or God: "The fenced-in egocentric and ego-oriented Adam the first is ineligible to join the covenantal prayer community… If God abandons His transcendental numinous solitude, He wills man to do likewise and step out of his isolation and aloneness" (57-58).

Victor Frankenstein: Adam I Writ Large

Nearly every characteristic the Rav ascribes to Adam I applies to Frankenstein. Consider these parallels:

- *LMF*: "Adam the first is overwhelmed by one quest, namely, to harness and dominate the elemental natural forces [which] arouse his will to learn the secrets of nature" (*LMF* 13).
- *Frankenstein*: "The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover;... Natural philosophy (the study of nature, science)... has regulated my fate... I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge" (*F.* 20, 21, 26).[3]

- *LMF*: "Adam the first... [asks only] How does the cosmos function" (*LMF* 13).

[3] All references are to Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, A Norton Critical Edition*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996). The complete 1818 text can be found here: https://archive.org/stream/Frankenstein1818Edition/frank-a5_djvu.txt.

- *Frankenstein*: Frankenstein admires how scientists have "penetrate[d] into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places" (*F.* 28).

- *LMF*: "Adam the first is aggressive, bold, and victory-minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker" (*LMF* 17).
- *Frankenstein*: "What glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (*F.* 22).

- *LMF*: "While pursuing this goal [Adam I] is driven by an urge which he cannot but obey" (*LMF* 19).
- *Frankenstein*: "A resistless... impulse, urged me forward. I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit" (*F.* 32).

Not only do the Rav's descriptions of Adam I's personality apply to Frankenstein, but so do the descriptions of Adam I's relationships. For the rabbi, Adam I engages in a "natural community... of interests, forged by the indomitable desire for success... consisting... of... the 'I' and the 'thou' who collaborate in order to further their interests" (*LMF* 41). This, the Rav argues, is why Adam I was created together with Eve.

Similarly, Victor's 'thou,' Elizabeth, appears in his life almost from his birth; his family adopts her when Victor is four years old. It is as if they were created together, but despite adoring her, he takes her for granted. If she is not the 'work partner' the Rav ascribes to Eve I, she is certainly not "an existential co-participant" (30) in Victor's life. He has no such relationship. Like Adam I, Frankenstein feels "more comfortable in the company of [his] Eve in a practical, not ontological way... They... act together... yet do not exist together" (31,32). In fact, Frankenstein abandons Elizabeth for the two years he devotes to creating the Monster, and ignores her for many months afterward.

In a sense, the Rav's formulation of Adam-and-Eve I's mandate applies to Victor and Elizabeth: "Male and female were summoned by their creator to act in unison in order to act successfully. Yet they were not charged with the task of existing in unison, in order to cleanse, redeem and hallow their existence" (32). Predictably, the Monster, who, like Adam II, is created alone, ascribes to his prospective Eve these very qualities, asserting that she would live with him "in sympathy" to "soothe [his] sorrows, or share [his] thoughts" (*Frankenstein* 98, 88). The Monster's need for sympathy corresponds to the Rav's description of Adam II's desire for a covenantal "community of commitments born in distress" (*LMF* 41). Thus, unlike Victor, the Monster wants a 'covenantal' relationship not only with other people, but with his maker.

Given these similarities, Frankenstein would seem to be a textbook case of Adam I, yet there is a crucial difference which transforms Victor into an extreme version of Adam I: his obsession with glory and renouncement of responsibility. While the Rav asserts that "man acquires dignity through glory," he adds, "[but] there is no dignity without responsibility (for living up to commitments)" (16). The rabbi also notes that "[d]ignity is linked with fame" (25), which is why Adam I is not created alone and has only utilitarian relationships. Yet his equation for Adam I, "humanity =dignity=responsibility=majesty (acting in harmony with

his nature)," (16) reveals Frankenstein's grotesqueness. Swallowed up by his need for dignity, fame, and glory, Victor abdicates his responsibility to the Monster, forfeiting his (Victor's) majesty and humanity in the process. This abdication even extends to those Frankenstein purports to love. For when he refuses to create a mate for the creature, the Monster vows to kill everyone his maker loves, even Elizabeth on her wedding night, and Victor does nothing to stop him.

Thus bereft of family and friends, Frankenstein begins to evoke Job.[4] Some literary critics have seen Victor as an innocent victim, punished disproportionately and unjustly for his sins. Yet the Rav's identification of Job with Adam I suggests that the Maker bears a degree of responsibility for his suffering. Casting Job as "pragmatic Adam the first," Rabbi Soloveitchik observes that only when Job prayed for his friends, not just for his own household, did God accept his prayers and restore his fortunes twofold. Like Job until the conclusion of the biblical book, Victor prays only for himself, having no concept of what the Rav calls "the covenantal nature of the prayer community in which destinies are dovetailed" (*LMF* 58). It never occurs to the scientist to pray for anyone else; his covenant is only with himself.

Indeed, the two times that Frankenstein prays, he does so for his own benefit – either for an opportunity to murder the wretch, or for his own death. The doctor confesses, "[I] ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great... revenge on his cursed head" (*Frankenstein* 138), and claims to have repeatedly "prayed for death" (140). Note that he prays only for his own revenge and release from misery. Just as God did not hear Job's selfish prayers, He does not hear Victor's.

According to our analogy, while the prayers of the Monster - analogous to Adam II - should be heard, because Frankenstein is the creature's 'god', Victor refuses to answer his Adam's prayer for an Eve. As a result, the creature responds, "I swear by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, that if you grant my prayer, while they exist you shall never behold me again" (*Frankenstein* 100). Even though Victor is initially moved by his creation's plea and begins to create a mate, once Frankenstein realizes that his Adam and Eve might have children, "[he] shuddered to think that future generations might curse [him] as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price... of the existence of the whole human race" (114-115). Even though this contradicts Victor's initial ambition – to be glorified as the father of a super race - his sole concern remains how posterity will judge him. Incapable of embracing his Adam-II desire for community, Frankenstein never learns what Job learns: to care about other people. This failure, I suggest, is Victor's most grotesque feature, and renders his spirit as hideous as his creature.

The Monster: Adam II Writ Large

The Monster has long been identified as personifying Frankenstein's soul: its unbridled ambition is out of human scale and morally grotesque, for Frankenstein wants to be God. However, the creature also embodies Adam II qualities: the desire to serve, empathy, altruism, need for community, and the desire for a relationship with his creator. Frankenstein is rightfully horrified when confronted with his own neglected humanity in the form of his 'child,' because both are out of human scale: The gigantic and hideously deformed Monster physically represents Victor's outsized, unnatural ambition. But the creature's heart

[4] See David Soyka, "Frankenstein and the Miltonic Creation of Evil."

is the physical manifestation of what should be Frankenstein's community-seeking Adam II. Thus, the Monster towers over Victor, glory-seeking Adam I, because the creature's magnanimity dwarfs Victor's egocentrism and obsession with conquering Nature.

Returning to Genesis 2's account of Adam's creation, we can see how the being's early life corresponds to the biblical text:

> And the eternal God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. And the eternal God planted a garden eastward in Eden... and took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to serve it and keep it. (*LMF* 10)

Frankenstein's 'man' is formed of exhumed body parts, which, in time, would have returned to dust; the creature "breathes hard" (*Frankenstein* 34) as his maker attempts to "infuse a spark of being" into him. He then wanders into the De Lacy family's garden, which, along with their cottage, he calls "a paradise" (71). After comprehending the family's poverty, the poor soul refrains from eating of their garden, and "satisfied [him]self with berries, nuts and roots... from a neighboring wood" (74). In fact, the poor creature's ability to live on a coarse diet of nuts and berries and bear severe environmental extremes reflects Adam II's focus on the non-physical, non-hedonistic values (altruism, friendship) that Victor either spurns or feels entitled to.

But the 'Monster' has empathy for the family and seeks more ways to serve them. For example, after observing how hard the young man works to gather firewood, the creature collects abundant amounts of wood at night and leaves them at the cottage door. Only after the family attacks him for befriending their blind old father does the being, enraged, burn down "every vestige of cultivation in the garden" (93) and the cottage.

Spurned and injured, the outcast travels to find Frankenstein, and on the way, sees a young girl drowning in a river. He "rushed from his hiding place, and, with extreme labor from the force of the current, saved her, and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and [he] endeavored to restore animation," at which point her father rips the girl from the savior's arms and shoots him (95). Following these unjust assaults, the outcast asks some of the very questions Rabbi Soloveitchik ascribes to Adam II: "Why is it? What is it? Who is it? Why did the world come into existence? Why is man confronted by this stupendous and indifferent order of things and events? What's the purpose of all this?" (*LMF* 20).

Frankenstein's 'being' puts those queries in personal terms: "What was I? Who was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" (*Frankenstein* 86), and asks his creator: "Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours... I am solitary and detested" (77). Indeed, the creature is consumed with Adam II's existential questions. But unlike his biblical counterpart, the poor wretch has only the mad doctor to appeal to for answers.

The solitary creature's loneliness also parallels Adam II's aloneness as the Rav describes it:

- "Adam the second [has] a dual role as a lonely individual and as one committed to a peculiar community idea" (*LMF* 33).

- "The 'I' awareness which he attains as the result of his untiring search for a redeemed, secure existence brings its own antithesis to the fore: the awareness of his exclusiveness and ontological incompatibility with any other being" (*LMF* 36).
- "If Adam (the second) [is to find redemption], he must initiate action leading to the discovery of a companion who, even though as unique and singular as he, will... form a community" (*LMF* 37-38).

Notice the ways in which these aspects of Adam II apply to the Monster. He is singular but yearns for companionship; he is cognizant of his incompatibility with any human being; and he initiates action to obtain a companion. Interestingly, the words redeem or redemption do not appear in Shelley's 1818 text, but the creature's desire to run away with Eve, who would live with him in sympathy if not love, would, one suspects, in his mind, redeem his existence. For his loneliness makes life unbearable. Thus, he pleads with his creator:

- "Oh Frankenstein... I ought to be thy Adam... everywhere I see bliss, from which I am irrevocably excluded" (*F.* 66).
- "Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence.... He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature... guarded by the especial care of his Creator... but I was wretched, helpless, and alone" (*F.* 87).
- "I am solitary and detested... I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me... My companion must be of the same species, and must have the same defects. This being you must create" (*F.* 88, 97).

The pariah then offers to live in the glacial wilderness with his Eve and promises never to interact with human beings again. Yet when he witnesses Frankenstein destroying the inchoate Eve, he is overcome with the desire not to avenge, but to force his maker to feel his Adam's crushing loneliness. In other words, he wants Victor to feel empathy.

Shelley's Morality Tale

Frankenstein and the creature are each one half of what we refer to as an 'individual.' The scientist recognizes as much, stating that he "has a double existence" (16), and believes the Monster is Victor's "own spirit let loose from the grave" (49). Yet ultimately they cannot coexist, because they are unintegrated and therefore incomplete.

The Rav makes this point forcefully, inquiring what the "contemporary man of faith" can say to Adam-I driven "modern society, which is technically-minded, self-centered, and self-loving, almost in a sickly narcissistic fashion, scoring honor upon honor, piling up victory upon victory" (*LMF* 6). We can imagine the Monster asking the same question of Victor; the two aspects of human nature must complement rather than war against one another. In these terms then, Shelley has effectively written a morality tale pitting warped versions of Adam I and Adam II against each other. Thus, the novel ends with Victor's death and the Monster's promised suicide by fire.

This brings Shelley's complete title full circle: Above the epigraph from *Paradise Lost* she wrote: *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus.* For the Romantics, Prometheus (Greek for 'forethought'), the Titan who stole fire from the gods to give to humankind, only to endure unspeakable suffering for doing so, symbolized the dangers of scientific knowledge. The myth, of course, harks back to Adam and Eve's original sin: eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

Yet despite Victor's implicit recognition of this when he confesses, "How dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge" (*Frankenstein* 31), knowledge alone does not destroy him. Ironically, the self-obsessed Frankenstein never learns that denying one's Adam-II self is, to echo Milton, a solitary way to lose paradise.[5]

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[5] *Paradise Lost* ends: "They (Adam and Eve) hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,/Through Eden took their solitary way." (*Paradise Lost.* Book XII. 648-649).

In God's Country: The "Zionism" of Rashi's First Comment

Elli Fischer

Rashi's first comment on the very first verse in the Torah might be the single best-known bit of Torah exegesis. Aside from being the opening words of the greatest commentator, it explicitly asserts the God-given right of the Jewish people to possess the Land of Israel. Given the unceasing attempts to delegitimize the State of Israel and deny the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, it is not surprising that the imagined conversation between Israel and "the nations of the world," who accuse it of thievery, resonates deeply. Finally, for believers, the uncomplicated notion that "God gave us this land" justifies Jewish possession, at least internally, without having to address questions of historical claims.

However, a line-by-line reading of this Rashi and the texts it cites shows that it is not as uncomplicated as it first seems (Rashi's words in bold):

> **Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah should have commenced with "This month shall be unto you the first of the months" (Exod. 12:2), which is the first mitzva commanded to Israel. Why does it begin with creation?**

If the Torah is a book of laws, why doesn't it begin with the first law? Fans of Robert Cover are delighted with Rashi's incipient recognition that a normative system must be embedded within a narrative that justifies the law.

> **Because "He told His people the power of His works in order that He might grant them the possession of the nations" (Psalms 111:6).**

God told His people about creation (His works) so He would be established as the world's owner, free to parcel out lands at His whim. As Ramban points out (and Stephen J. Fraade, reading Rashi in view of Cover, echoes), this answer explains why the Torah includes an account of creation but not why it includes the remaining 48 chapters of Genesis and the first 11 chapters of Exodus. However, looking at the verse from Psalms in its original context indicates that Rashi may have been after something else:

> He told His people the power of His works,
> in order that He might grant them the possession of the nations;
> The works of His hand are **truth** and **justice**; all His **precepts** are enduring,
> well-founded for all eternity, wrought of **truth** and **uprightness** (Ps. 111:6-8)

The "works" (*ma'asav*) of the first verse are described as truth (*emet*) and justice (*mishpat*) in the very next verse. That is, if the first verse refers to creation, then creation itself is charged with a moral dimension. Unlike in other Ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, in the Torah's account, it was no capricious, morally neutral display of Divine power. The world was created for a purpose, and truth and justice are an integral part of it. The Psalmist then goes on to tie God's works with His precepts. Like the world itself, they are enduring and wrought of truth (*emet*) and uprightness (*yashar*).

It follows, then, that God's gift of the land to Israel was not arbitrary, but was in view of furthering the goals of truth and justice through the fulfillment of His true and upright

precepts. This sounds a lot like a message that is explicit in Deuteronomy (6:18): "Do what is **upright** (*yashar*) and good in the eyes of the Lord, that it may be good with you and that you may inherit the good land that the Lord your God swore to your fathers." Here, the granting of the land is explicitly conditioned on doing what is good and right in God's eyes.

And what exactly is "good and upright in God's eyes"? Rashi on that verse explains simply: Making compromises and going beyond the letter of the law. Ramban is more expansive, viewing it as the overarching goal of all the commandments:

> Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbors and friends, and all his various transactions, and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them…he reverted to state in a general way that, in all matters, one should do what is good and upright; including even compromise and going beyond the requirements of the law. (Chavel translation)

Here, possession of the land is conditioned on going *beyond* the letter of the law and embodying the values and virtues—the right and the good—that underlie it.

It is now evident that Rashi's explanation for the necessity of the whole of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus is not limited to creation, but extends to the stories of the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, and the lives of the Patriarchs. These tales are moral tales that prefigure and shape the values that later become law, and it is for this reason, as Netziv famously wrote, that an alternative name for Genesis is "The Book of the Upright" ("*Sefer Ha-yashar*").

> **For should the nations of the world say to Israel, "You are thieves, because you occupied the lands of seven nations," they reply: "All the earth belongs to the Holy One; He created it and granted it to he who was right in His eyes. By His will He gave it to them, and by His will He took it from them and gave it to us."**

We can now understand this final statement in a different light. "His will" is no mere whim. "Who was right (*yashar*!) in His eyes" echoes the verse in Deuteronomy. It has an even closer parallel as well, though, which further demonstrates that Rashi understood Israel's possession of the land to be contingent upon doing God's bidding.

At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the destruction of the first Temple and the exile to Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah was commanded to deliver a message. It begins, like the Torah itself, with an account of creation, and then, like Rashi, explicitly connects God's creation to His right to allocate the land as He deems fit:

> It is I who made the earth, and the men and beasts who are on the earth, by My great might and My outstretched arm; and I have granted it **to he who is right in My eyes** (Jer. 27:5).

Though he places the words in the mouths of Israel as they respond to the nations, Rashi's words are taken directly from Jeremiah. In this context, the next verse is astonishing:

I herewith deliver all these lands to My servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (*ibid*. 6)

In Jeremiah's prophecy, God's creation and continued sovereignty over the world is used **to justify the dispossession of Judah and the granting of its lands to Nebuchadnezzar!**

In truth, the theology underlying Rashi's comments should not surprise us. The Torah, and the Talmud and Jewish liturgy in its wake, is filled with promises and threats that tie possession of the land to fulfillment of the commandments and dispossession and exile to transgression and punishment. "Due to our sins, we have been exiled from our land."

In fact, it is the "straightforward" reading of this Rashi that goes against the grain of the Torah's theology—though, to be fair, it too has biblical precedent—in the person of Jeremiah's rival, Hananiah ben Azzur, the false prophet (Jer. 28). Complacency, however, is the very last sentiment Rashi would have us derive from the Torah's first verse.

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