

The Book of Job
Chapters 38 – 41
Melton at the JCC, November 30 and December 7, 2011

Comparison to Job, chapter 3 (based on Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, pages 96 – 110)

Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, page 110

Avot de-Rabbi Natan, chapter 31

Rabbi Nechemya says: From where do we know that man is equal in importance to all of creation? For it says (*Bereishit* 5:1): "This is the book of the generations of Man [in the day that God created mankind, in the likeness of God He fashioned him,]" and below it says (*Bereishit* 2:4): "These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, [in the day that the Lord God fashioned the earth and the heavens.]" Just as there creation and fashioning, here too creation and fashioning.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot, page 6b

Rebbi Eleazar says: The Holy One, blessed be He, says: The whole world was created only for man's sake.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabat, page 77b

Rav Yehudah said in Rav's name: Of all that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, He did not create a single thing without purpose. [Thus] He created the snail as a remedy for a wound; the fly as an antidote to the hornet[*'s* sting]; the mosquito [crushed] for a serpent[*'s* bite]; a serpent as a remedy for an eruption. and a [crushed] spider as a remedy for a scorpion[*'s* bite].

Rabbenu Sa'adya Gaon, Emunot ve-De'ot (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions), part IV

When we see that the creatures are many in number, nevertheless, we need not be confused in regard to which of them constitutes the goal of creation. For there exists a natural criterion by means of which we can determine which one of all the creatures is the end. When, then, we make our investigation with this criterion [as a guide], we find that the goal is man. We arrive at this conclusion in the following manner: Habit and nature place whatever is most highly prized in the center of things which are themselves not so highly prized... When, therefore, we see that this situation appertains to many things and then find the earth in the center of heaven with the heavenly spheres surrounding it on all sides, it becomes clear to us that the thing which was the subject of creation must be on the earth.[1] Upon further investigation of all its parts we note that the earth and water are both inanimate, whereas we find that the beasts are irrational. Hence only man is left, which gives us the certainty that he must unquestionably have been the intended purpose of creation. When we

examine the Scriptures, we likewise find in them a statement by God to the effect that "I, even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it" (*Yeshaya* 45:12). In fact, at the very beginning of the Torah God listed all classes of creation. Then, when He had completed them all, He said: "Let us make man" (*Bereishit* 1:26), like a person who builds a palace and, after having furnished and decorated it, brings its owner into it.

Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael, chapter 4

Just as the sun reigns, so is man a king, for everything is subject to him. Man's royalty expresses itself in that he brings perfection to all earthly creatures, for everything was created in order to serve man and minister to him. In this way he is the form for all earthly creatures, bringing perfection to everything, like a king, who perfects everything.

Rambam, Guide of the Perplexed, part III, chapter 13

it is sometimes thought that, according to our opinion and our doctrine of the production in time of the world as a whole after nonexistence ... the finality of all that exists is solely the existence of the human species so that it should worship God, and that all that has been made has been made for it alone so that even the heavenly spheres only revolve in order to be useful to it and to bring into existence that which is necessary for it. Some passages in the books of the prophets, if taken according to their external sense, give strong support to this thought ... However, if this opinion is carefully examined, as opinions ought to be carefully examined by intelligent men, the flaw in it becomes clear ... Necessarily and obligatorily the argument must end with the answer being given that the final end is: God has wished it so, or: His wisdom has required this to be so. And this is the correct answer...

For this reason, to my mind, the correct view according to the beliefs of the Law - a view that corresponds likewise to the speculative views - is as follows: It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else... Just as He has willed that the human species should come to exist, He also has willed that the spheres and their stars should come to exist... This view too has been expressed in the prophetic books. Thus it says: "The Lord has made everything *lema'anehu* [for His sake or for its sake]" (*Mishlei* 16:4), where the third person [i.e., 'His' or 'its'] may refer to the complement [i.e., to 'everything']. If, however, it refers to the subject, the interpretation of the word [*lema'anehu*] would be: for the sake of His essence, may He be exalted - that is, for the sake of His will...

If you consider the book which guides all those who seek guidance toward what is correct and therefore is called the Torah, the notion that we have in view will become manifest to you from the commencement of the account of creation till the end. For with reference to none of them is the statement made in any way that it exists for the sake of some other thing. He only says that He brought every part of the world into existence and that its existence confirmed to its purpose. This is the meaning of the his saying: "And God saw that it was good" (*Bereishit* 1)...

Hence be not misled in your soul to think that the spheres and the angels have been brought into existence for our sake. For it has explained to us what we are worth: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket" (*Yeshaya* 40:15).