

The Image of God in humanity

Abstract

The Bible is about the story of Israel, but it does *not* begin with Israel. It begins with humanity. Human beings are unique in the world because they are capable of meaningful relationships with each other and with God. They are volitional creatures capable of acting on their will, for better or for worse. The capacity for meaningful action within interpersonal relationships is the plain meaning of man as the "Image of God" in the Bible and in rabbinic literature. God is a personality, not a concept.

Interpersonal relationships are just that: personal and contextual, not universal. Each one is unique. It is in this sense that the Ten Commandments are best understood, and this is indeed how rabbinic *midrash* understood them: "Religious" commandments and "social" commandments are the very same thing, namely matters of personal loyalty and integrity. The only difference between them is that the first set is about integrity towards God (who is a personality), while the second set is about integrity towards other people.

In this sense, the "Image of God" becomes the basis for human morality in the biblical and rabbinic view.

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