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from: Shabbat Shalom <ShabbatShalom@ounetwork.org> date: Tue, Sep 24, 2013 at 4:13 PM subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

A Living Book

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

It is the most famous, majestic and influential opening of any book in literature: "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth." What is surprisingly strange is the way Rashi – most beloved of all Jewish commentators – begins his commentary:

Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah should have begun with the verse (Ex. 12: 1): "This month shall be to you the first of the months", which was the first commandment given to Israel.

Can we really take this at face value? Did Rabbi Isaac, or for that matter Rashi, seriously suggest that the Book of books might have begun in the middle – a third of the way into Exodus? That it might have passed by in silence the creation of the universe – which is, after all, one of the fundamentals of Jewish faith?

Could we understand the history of Israel without its prehistory, the stories of Abraham and Sarah and their children? Could we have understood those narratives without knowing what preceded them: G-d's repeated disappointment with Adam and Eve, Cain, the generation of the Flood and the builders of the Tower of Babel?

The fifty chapters of Genesis together with the opening of Exodus are the source- book of biblical faith. They are as near as we get to an exposition of the philosophy of Judaism. What then did Rabbi Isaac mean?

He meant something profound, which we often forget. To understand a book, we need to know to what genre it belongs. Is it history or legend, chronicle or myth? To what question is it an answer? A history book answers the question: what happened? A book of cosmology – be it science or myth – answers the question: how did it happen?

What Rabbi Isaac is telling us is that if we seek to understand the Torah, we must read it as Torah, which is to say: law, instruction, teaching, guidance. Torah is an answer to the question: how shall we

live? That is why he raises the question as to why it does not begin with the first command given to Israel.

Torah is not a book of history, even though it includes history. It is not a book of science, even though the first chapter of Genesis – as the 19th-century sociologist Max Weber pointed out – is the necessary prelude to science, because it represents the first time people saw the universe as the product of a single creative will, and therefore as intelligible rather than capricious and mysterious. It is, first and last, a book about how to live. Everything it contains – not only commandments but also narratives, including the narrative of creation itself – is there solely for the sake of ethical and spiritual instruction.

It moves from the minutest details to the most majestic visions of the universe and our place within it. But it never deviates from its intense focus on the questions: What shall I do? How shall I live? What kind of person should I strive to become? It begins, in Genesis 1, with the most fundamental question of all. As the Psalm (8: 4) puts it: "What is man that You are mindful of him?"

Pico della Mirandola's 15th century Oration on Man was one of the turning points of Western civilization, the "manifesto" of the Italian Renaissance. In it he attributed the following declaration to G-d, addressing the first man: "We have given you, O Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgement and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine."

Homo sapiens, that unique synthesis of "dust of the earth" and breath of G-d, is unique among created beings in having no fixed essence: in being free to be what he or she chooses. Mirandola's Oration was a break with the two dominant traditions of the Middle Ages: the Christian doctrine that human beings are irretrievably corrupt, tainted by original sin, and the Platonic idea that humanity is bounded by fixed forms.

It is also a strikingly Jewish account – almost identical with the one given by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in *Halakhic Man*: "The most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself. It is this idea that Judaism introduced into the world." It is therefore with a frisson of recognition that we discover that Mirandola had a Jewish teacher, Rabbi Elijah ben Moses Delmedigo (1460-1497).

Born in Crete, Delmedigo was a Talmudic prodigy, appointed at a young age to be head of the yeshiva in Padua. At the same time, he studied philosophy, in particular the work of Aristotle, Maimonides and Averroes. At the age of 23 he was appointed professor of philosophy at the University of Padua. It was through this that he came to know Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who became both his student and his patron. Eventually, however, Delmedigo's philosophical writings – especially his work *Bechinat ha-Dat* – became controversial. He was accused, by other rabbis, of heresy. He had to leave Italy and return to Crete. He was much admired by Jews and Christians alike, and when he died young, many Christians as well as Jews attended his funeral.

This emphasis on choice, freedom and responsibility is one of the most distinctive features of Jewish thought. It is proclaimed in the first chapter of Genesis in the most subtle way. We are all familiar with its statement that G-d created man "in His image, after His likeness". Seldom do we

pause to reflect on the paradox. If there is one thing emphasized time and again in the Torah, it is that G-d has no image. "I will be what I will be", He says to Moses when he asks Him His name.

Since G-d transcends nature – the fundamental point of Genesis 1 – then He is free, unbounded by nature's laws. By creating human beings in His image, He gave us a similar freedom, thus creating the one being capable itself of being creative. The unprecedented account of G-d in the Torah's opening chapter leads to an equally unprecedented view of the human person and our capacity for self-transformation.

The Renaissance, one of the high points of European civilization, eventually collapsed. A series of corrupt rulers and Popes led to the Reformation, and to the quite different views of Luther and Calvin. It is fascinating to speculate what might have happened had it continued along the lines signalled by Mirandola. His late 15th century humanism was not secular but deeply religious.

As it is, the great truth of Genesis 1 remains. As the rabbis put it (Bereishith Rabbah 8: 1; Sanhedrin 38a): "Why was man created last? In order to say, if he is worthy, all creation was made for you; but if he is unworthy, he is told, even a gnat preceded you." The Torah remains G-d's supreme call to humankind to freedom and creativity on the one hand, and on the other, to responsibility and restraint – becoming G-d's partner in the work of creation.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bereshis x

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to ravfrand Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Bereshis These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #828, The Baal Teshuva and Pirya Ve'Rivya. Good Shabbos! Never Miss Subscription Series

A Tale Of Two Wives

The Torah states: "And Lemch took for himself two wives (Vayikach lo Lemech shtei nashim) the name of one was Adah and the name of the second was Tzeelah" [Bereshis 4:19]. The word "lo" (for himself) seems superfluous in this pasuk. I saw this issue raised in the Sefer Pri Dovid from Rabbi Dovid Friedman of Montreal. He suggests the following approach: Rashi comments that the custom of the generation preceding the Flood was to have two wives -- one was designated as the wife to become pregnant and raise a family with, the other was reserved for non-procreative sexual pleasure. Rashi elaborates that the wife set aside for physical gratification would be given a potion which would make her sterile. She would be given a diet and make-up designed to keep her looking young and beautiful. The other would be neglected. This is the practice that Lemech himself adopted and this is why the pasuk writes "Lemach took FOR HIMSELF" -- emphasizing this inclination to satisfy his own needs for physical gratification.

This is akin to a similar insight on the pasuk in Ki Seitzei introducing the laws of divorce: "When a man takes a wife and has relations with her (ki Yikach ish isha u'ba-a-lah)... [Devorim 24:1]" This is a rather blunt way of talking! The lesson to be learned from the way the Torah writes this is that when a man marries a woman and his first thought is about physical relations, this does not bode well for their marriage and we can well understand why it is that such a marriage will end in divorce. When a person enters into marriage only thinking about himself and his own physical needs, such a marriage is not destined to last.

Lemach's wife for procreation, Adah, had two sons. The first one's name was Yaval. He began the profession of raising cattle. He was basically a large scale herdsman. His brother's name was Yuval. He invented musical instruments. Both children of Adah had honorable

professions -- one was a shepherd and one manufactured instruments. It turns out that the second wife, Tzeelah, also had a son. He was called Tuval Kayin. We went into the weapons business. He was basically the first gun manufacturer. His name indicates he wanted to improve on Kayin's work. Kayin was the first murderer. Tuval Kayin was going to improve on Kayin's work and manufactured weapons to make killing easier and more efficient!

Kli Yakar makes the comment that Adah's children had honorable professions because the marriage was based on noble purposes -- procreation. On the other hand, the offspring from Tzeelah, who Lemach married for more selfish, less noble, motives, went into a profession that brought further pain and suffering into the world.

The Inevitable Shock of Death

After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, HaShem told him he would "return to the earth". In other words, now that he violated HaShem's commandment, he would be mortal and would eventually die. Despite the fact that we are all aware of the inevitability in life that we all die, the universal reaction when someone dies is one of shock. People age, they become infirm, they get sick. But when the moment of death happens, it is always a shock. Why is this?

The Ramban in his Toras HaAdam says a profound idea. When Adam was first created, he was created so that he should live forever. His persona encompassed all the human beings that would eventually be born in this world. Part of every human being in the world today is a remnant of that first man who was created by G-d. Therefore, part of us -- deep down within our psyche -- has the attitude "I am going to live forever." Therefore, when a person dies, as inevitable as that fact is, there is shock and surprise. This phenomenon contradicts that part of each person in humanity who thinks "I will live forever" based on the way Adam was originally created.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for this Parsha are provided below:

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Parshas Bereishis: The Dynamic Attraction of Kedushah

Author: Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

Article Date: Friday October 16, 2009

"Bereishis bara Elokim es ha-shamayim v'es ha-aretz." (1:1)

The opening pasuk of the Torah is so familiar to us that we take it for granted. Rashi, however, quotes Chazal (see Yalkut Shimoni, Parshas Bo #187), who wonder why the Torah begins at the beginning. After all, it's not until much later, in Parshas Bo, that the Jewish people receive their first commandment, the mitzvah of Kiddush Ha-Chodesh, sanctifying the new moon. Wouldn't it have made more sense, therefore, to begin the Torah with the first mitzvah?

Rashi famously cites the explanation that the Torah begins with the creation of the world in order to reinforce the Jewish claim to Eretz Yisroel. After all, "if the nations of the world will say to Israel 'You are bandits' for you conquered the lands of the 'Seven Nations,'" we can reply that Hashem is the creator of the world – He gave the Land of

Israel to the “Seven Nations” and therefore He had the right to take it away from them and give it to the Jewish people.

In the excitement over Rashi’s “punch line” we may overlook something quite startling that he mentions in passing: The Shiva Amamin, the “Seven Nations,” were divinely sanctioned as the initial inhabitants and rulers of Eretz Yisroel!

From what we know about the sanctity of the land and, conversely, the immorality of these nations, this is a shocking phenomenon.

What are we to make of the fact that holy Eretz Yisroel was originally given to these wicked people? Why would such sanctity be entrusted to morally bankrupt nations?

Rav Mayer Twersky suggests that, “this jarring contrast was intended to foreshadow a fundamental historical pattern – indeed, a veritable law of history – and metaphysical truth. Sanctity arouses violent opposition.”

While we might have imagined that immoral and non-religious and anti-religious people would simply ignore religious holy places and sacred symbols, R. Twersky keenly observes that in truth, throughout history that has simply not been the case. “On the contrary ... forces of evil and impurity are perversely drawn to holy sites. They seek to suppress sanctity by gaining sovereignty over such sacred places.” One famous example of this trend is Titus, who chose the Menorah and the looting of Jerusalem to be singled out from all of his conquests, and engraved on the “Arch of Titus” in Rome.

The first example – and paradigm – of this historico-spiritual reality was the initial granting of Eretz Yisroel to the Shiva Amamin. “Precisely because of its sanctity,” R. Twersky, concludes, the Land of Israel, “would arouse the forces of evil and become the focal point in the struggle between Good and Evil.”

This insight was foreshadowed – and perhaps even inspired – by a drasha given by Rav Soloveitchik where the Rav made the same essential point in explaining a seemingly incidental detail mentioned by the Gemara at the end of Maseches Makkos.

As is well known, the Gemara recounts the story of a number of great sages walking in close proximity to the ruins of the Holy Temple shortly after the Churban Ha-Bayis. After the rabbis witness a shual, a fox, rummaging around the area where the Kodesh Ha-Kedoshim, the Holy of Holies, used to stand, they become overwhelmed with grief and most of the rabbis break down in tears. On the other hand, the Gemara continues, R. Akiva had the opposite reaction and laughed.

While much rabbinic attention has been focused on the vivid scene depicted by the Gemara, R. Soloveitchik wondered about the significance of the shual.

“Er hut nisht besser a pletzer tzu shpa’tziren?”

Was there no where else, he asked, for the fox to scurry? Could it be nothing more than a coincidence that the fox was in, of all places, the Holy of Holies?

The Rav answered that the presence of the fox demonstrates the significance of the Beis Ha-Mikdash.

“Az de’shual veist instinctiv az di makom is heilig.”

The fox – symbolizing the kochos ha-tumah, spiritually impure forces – is instinctively drawn to this holy place; in fact there is nowhere the shual would rather be than in the Beis Ha-Mikdash.

Once again we have an example of this metaphysical truth.

Tumah is attracted to Taharah and Chol gravitates towards Kedushah.

The “Seven Nations” were originally in Eretz Yisroel and the fox was in the ruins of the Kodesh Ha-Kedoshim.

As Jews around the world continue to battle various forms of anti-Semitism and as Israel continues to face the specter of enemy attacks and diplomatic condemnation, it might be natural to wonder: why us? Why is it always us? Why can’t they just leave us alone?

From the halls of the U.N. to the desert plains of Iran, the world’s continued preoccupation with Israel and the Jewish people is but the latest example of the of the historical pattern that Rashi alludes to in his

opening commentary. The perverse obsession with us is a result of the fact that they recognize – consciously or otherwise – the true holiness of our homeland and nation.

This understanding should offer us a measure of comfort, and perhaps, like R. Akiva, bring a smile to our face.

And more important than understanding the psychology of our enemies, it should remind us of these axiological truths. It’s woefully inadequate if only the “shual” appreciates the holiness.

We must be aware of and committed to kedushah and we too must “veist instinctiv” that both Eretz Yisroel and Am Yisroel are “heilig.”

In the merit of our increased sensitivity and dedication to this sanctity may we merit to soon see the day where there is true peace and God’s presence is manifest to all.

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-Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum, from Volume 10 Number 1: Ki Teitzei

Parshat Ki Teitzei Vol.10 No.1 Date of issue: 9 Elul 5760 -- September 9, 2000

Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction The Gemara (Berachot 8a) teaches, "one should always finish the Parshiot with the community [by studying] Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum (the Parsha twice and Targum Onkelos once)." The Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 285:2) notes that this is a rabbinical obligation. It seems that women are not obligated to study Shemot (the common acronym for Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum), since it is a time bound positive obligation. In this issue, we will examine the parameters of this obligation.

Reason for the Obligation In the introduction to the Sefer Hachinuch, the author explains a reason for this obligation in a simple yet beautiful way:

Our sages established that we should read a portion of the Torah every week in the synagogue to inspire us to observe the Torah... The sages also obligated us to study in our home every week the Torah portion that is read in the synagogue to further enhance our understanding of the Torah.

The aforementioned Gemara notes that all those who engage in Shemot "have their days and years lengthened." One may interpret the Gemara as saying that this practice greatly enhances the quality of one's life. Surely, the joy on Simchat Torah of one who has fulfilled his Shemot obligation is exponentially greater than one who has not done so. Moreover, the Shabbat of those who observe this Halacha is immensely enhanced. Indeed, the Tur and Shulchan Aruch present this Halacha in the context of Hilchot Shabbat. Rav Soloveitchik told this author that the primary time for Shemot is Shabbat. This author also heard from Rav Soloveitchik (in a public lecture delivered at Yeshiva University) that every Shabbat is characterized by the Parsha of the week. For instance, the Shabbat on which we read Parshat Ki Teitzei is not simply Shabbat; it is Shabbat Parshat Ki Teitzei. One may argue that while the public reading of the Torah characterizes Shabbat as, for instance, Shabbat Parshat Ki Teitzei, on the communal level, individual Shemot study characterizes the Shabbat as Shabbat Parshat Ki Teitzei for the individual.

Of course, the primary way that Shemot enhances one's life is by promoting fluency in our most basic and holy text, the Torah. The Jew who is not fluent in the Torah certainly does not enjoy a good Jewish quality of life. Accordingly, even women, who are not technically obligated to study Shemot, receive abundant reward for doing so.

A Defense for Those Who Do Not Study Shemot Many individuals do not engage in Shemot for a variety of reasons. There is a "Limud Zechut" (limited Halachic basis) for these people. The Bait Yosef (Orach Chaim

285 s.v. Aval Misham) cites the opinion of the Raavan that Shemot is an obligation only for an individual who has not heard Kriat Hatorah in shul. According to the Raavan, Shemot is merely a substitute for Kriat Hatorah.

However, the Bait Yosef points out that almost all Rishonim reject the view of the Raavan. For example, he cites the Rambam (Hilchot Tefila 13:25) who writes that "although one hears the communal reading of the Torah he must study the Parsha every week Shnayim Mikra V'echad Targum." In fact, the Vilna Gaon (Biur Hagra O.C. 285:1) specifically notes that the Shulchan Aruch rejects the opinion of the Raavan.

Accordingly, those who do not study Shemot are not "sinners." However, it is proper to study Shemot in addition to hearing Kriat Hatorah in shul. All authorities concur, though, that one must study Shemot if he did not hear the communal Torah reading.

When Must We Complete Shemot Study? The Gemara does not specifically state that one must complete Shemot by a specific time. Tosafot (s.v. Yashlim), however, states that it is preferable to complete Shemot before eating on Shabbat. In fact, the Magen Avraham (285:2) cites the Shelah Hakadosh who writes that it is preferable to complete Shemot on Friday after Chatzot (midday). This preference stems from Kabbalistic concerns (Kabbalists attach profound significance to Shemot study - see Baer Heiteiv and Shaarei Teshuva 285:1). Tosafot notes, though, that it is acceptable to complete Shemot study even after the meal. However, Tosafot believes that Shemot must be completed before Shabbat ends. Indeed, the primary opinion presented by the Shulchan Aruch states that one must complete Shemot before Shabbat ends.

Nevertheless, the Shulchan Aruch cites two lenient opinions that appear in the Rishonim. One lenient view allows one to finish Shemot until the Wednesday after Shabbat in which we read the particular Parsha. This view is based on the Gemara (Pesachim 106a) that permits one to recite Havdala until Wednesday if he forgot to do so on Motzei Shabbat. A second, even more lenient view allows one until Simchat Torah to finish Shemot. The Aruch Hashulchan (285:10) writes that this is a viable opinion. The Mishna Berura (285:12) cautions that all authorities concur that it is preferable to complete Shemot before Shabbat ends.

When May We Begin Study of Shemot? Tosafot writes that the earliest time to begin Shemot study of a particular Parsha is after the Mincha on Shabbat afternoon when we begin to read from that Parsha. This opinion is codified by the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 285:3, and see Mishna Berura 285:7).

One may suggest that this opinion of Tosafot reflects their view that Shemot is a weekly obligation (i.e. that we must study Shemot of a particular Parsha within the week in which we publicly read that particular Parsha). However, the lenient opinion that believes that one may complete Shemot until Simchat Torah regards Shemot as a yearly obligation (i.e. that every year one must complete Shemot). It would appear that just as the lenient view permits completing Shemot late, it also permits starting Shemot as early as Parshat Bereishit. Thus, if one finds difficulty in completing Shemot during the course of the year but is able to do so during a vacation period, he should take the opportunity and complete Shemot for the entire year during the vacation period. Rav Efraim Greenblatt and Rav Mordechai Willig told this author that they agree with this analysis.

Rashi or Targum Onkelos The Rosh (Berachot 1:8) and the Tur (O.C. 285) assert that Rashi's commentary to Chumash constitutes an alternative for Targum Onkelos for the study of Shemot. The Bait Yosef (O.C. 285 s.v. V'im Lamad), however, cites the Ri (Rashi's great grandson) as disputing this assertion. He thus rules that a "God fearing individual" should study both Targum Onkelos and Rashi. Similarly, in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 285:3), Rav Karo rules that Rashi serves as a viable alternative to Onkelos, but a "God fearing person" should study both Rashi and Onkelos.

It seems from the Shulchan Aruch that if one had enough time to study either Onkelos or Rashi that one could choose either and that there is no preference between the two. The Mishna Berura and the Aruch Hashulchan also do not seem to indicate a preference between Onkelos and Rashi. It would thus appear that one with limited time is permitted to study either Onkelos or Rashi, according to his own preference. See, however, the Shaarei Teshuva (285:2) who presents a dispute among the Acharonim whether Onkelos or Rashi is preferable for one with limited time.

Alternative Translations Tosafot (s.v. Shnayim) cites an opinion that asserts that any translation of the Chumash into the local vernacular constitutes a viable alternative to Onkelos. Tosafot then rejects this opinion stating that Onkelos is special because Onkelos not only translates the Chumash but also explains many obscure words and passages. Both the Mishna Berura (285:5) and the Aruch Hashulchan (285:12) cite Tosafot's view as normative. However, the Mishna Berura writes that if one cannot comprehend Rashi he may use a Yiddish (or any other language) translation based on Rashi and traditional sources that are rooted in the Talmudic tradition.

Conclusion The study of Shemot is within the grasp of virtually anyone. If one cannot fulfill this obligation at the optimal level, he should nevertheless make every effort to fulfill this Mitzva as best he can. It might be a good idea to carry a small Chumash in one's attache case or car so that one can seize available moments to study Shemot.

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Parsha Potpourri Bereishis – Vol. 9, Issue 1

Compiled by Rabbi Ozer Alport

Vayitzer Hashem Elokim es ha'adam afar min ha'adama vayipach b'apav nishmas chaim vayeih ha'adam l'nefesh chaya (2:7)

A man who was stricken with cancer was presented by his doctor with a painful and heart-wrenching decision to make. In order to treat his illness, the doctor would need to perform surgery, and in order to access the affected region, he would need to cut through either the man's esophagus or his vocal cords. As a result, the man would permanently lose either the ability to eat, requiring the insertion of a feeding tube, or the ability to speak. From a medical perspective, the two options were equal, so the doctor gave the man the choice of how the surgery should be performed. Although most people would approach this tragic decision by weighing which of the two faculties is more important to them, this patient was an observant Jew who understood that his decision would have important ramifications for his ability to perform mitzvos. If he gave up his ability to eat naturally, he would no longer be able to perform the Biblical mitzvos of eating matzah, eating on the day before Yom Kippur, and eating in the sukkah. On the other hand, if he lost his faculty of speech, he would be unable to say Shema and Birkas HaTorah.

Unsure of the proper course of action, he approached a Rav for halachic guidance. However, rather than focus on weighing the mitzvos to be preserved and lost, the Rav surprised the man by citing the translation of Onkelos on our verse. The Torah records that Hashem formed man from the dust of the ground and blew into him the soul of life, at which point man became a living being. Onkelos renders the phrase "and man became a living being" as a reference to the fact that he acquired the ability to speak. In other words, as advanced as man may be, virtually everything that he can do can also be duplicated by other living creatures. Onkelos is teaching us that what makes man uniquely human and elevated above all other species of animals is the ability to speak. In light of this insight into the special status of the power of speech, the Rav advised the man to preserve his vocal cords and forego the ability to eat naturally. Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein adds that even according to the man's initial approach of weighing the mitzvos involved, it is clear that the mitzvos which required the power of speech

are performed much more regularly than those which are associated with the ability to eat and would therefore take precedence.

Vayapel Hashem Elokim Tardemah Al HaAdam Vayishan Vayikach Achas Mitzalosav Vayasger Basar Tachtena (2:21) In relating all of the details and the order of the Creation, the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 17:6) points out that it isn't until our verse, the 52nd verse in the Torah, that the letter ס appears. After creating Adam, Hashem cast a deep sleep upon him. After taking one of his ribs to form his wife Chava, Hashem closed (ויסגר) Adam's flesh. As an aside, the Medrash points out that the letter ס does appear a few verses earlier (2:11 and 2:13) in the word הסוכב, but explains that in that case it is referring to the river so it doesn't count. One of the commentators on the Medrash, the Matnos Kehuna, explains that the word הסוכב is merely describing where the river runs, but has nothing to do with the creation of anything. The first ס used in describing the Creation is in the word ויסגר in our verse describing the creation of Chava. Why doesn't the letter ס appear for so long, and what is the significance of the fact that it is first used in this verse? Rabbi Paysach Krohn explains that when spelled out, the letter ס is written סמך, which is also the word which means "support." The Gemora teaches (Yevamos 62b) that a man who dwells without a wife is lacking many things, one of which is a הומה – wall. The commentators explain that a supportive wife can serve to protect and encourage her husband. The Mishnah (Taanis 26b) teaches that לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיום הכיפורים. Literally, this means that the happiest days for the Jewish people were the fifteenth day of Av and Yom Kippur, as on these days eligible young women would go out in the field in order for the men to select their matches. However, the Arizal suggests that the words **באב** כחמשה עשר can be interpreted as referring not only to the fifteenth day of the month of Av, but also to the fifteenth letter in the aleph-beis (Hebrew alphabet), which is the letter ס, as on that day the Jewish men went to find their walls of support. The Torah relates that Hashem created Chava to serve as an עזר כנגדו – helpmate opposite him – for Adam. The numerical value of this phrase is 360 – the number of degrees in a circle which surrounds and protects what is inside of it. The Targum renders the word "helpmate" into Aramaic as סמך – supportive wall. For this reason, a bride walks around the groom under the wedding canopy to symbolize this function, and the groom marries the bride by giving her a circular ring. Therefore, the very letter which means support and is written as a circle is used for the first time to describe the creation of the first person – Chava – who fulfilled this role.

Vayomer mi higid lecha ki eirom atah ha'min ha'eitz asher tzivisicha l'vilti achal mimenu achalta (3:11) Although we are taught that the Torah is the blueprint for the entire world and all people who will ever live and every event which will ever occur is alluded to somewhere in the Torah, we are generally unable to pinpoint the specific allusion to a given person or incident. However, the Gemora (Chullin 139b) explicitly spells out where Mordechai, Esther, and Haman are hinted to in the Torah. The Gemora teaches that Haman is alluded to in our verse, in which Hashem asks Adam "ha'min ha'eitz" – have you eaten from the tree which I prohibited to you? On a simple level, this is a play on words, as the Torah is not written with vowels, so the vowels in the word "ha'min" can be changed so that it is pronounced "Haman." However, if the Torah found no more appropriate place to hint to Haman, there must be a more profound connection between him and Adam's sin of eating from the forbidden fruit. On a basic level, the Shelah HaKadosh points out that the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge was a sin involving eating something forbidden, and the Gemora teaches (Megillah 12a) that Haman was able to threaten the Jews with destruction because they sinned by eating forbidden food at Achashverosh's party. On a deeper level, the Chiddushei HaRim explains that Amalek, from whom Haman was descended, represents the concept of questioning belief in Hashem. The word "Amalek" has the

same numerical value as the word "safek" (doubt), and Amalek came to attack the Jews right after they expressed uncertainty about Hashem, asking (Shemos 17:7): is Hashem in our midst, or perhaps not? Haman isn't alluded to in the verses relating the actual sin of eating from the forbidden fruit. Instead, his name is contained in our verse, which presents a question that seems to call Hashem's omniscience into doubt, as it appears as though He isn't sure if Adam ate from the forbidden tree or not. The B'nei Yissochar points out another beautiful parallel. In the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge, all of man's senses were involved and therefore damaged except for one. Chava sinned by listening to the temptations of the serpent with her ears, seeing the beautiful fruit with her eyes, taking it from the tree with her hands, eating from it with her mouth, and convincing Adam to eat from it as well using her speech. Only the sense of smell was not involved in the sin, as the sense of smell is more connected to spirituality and the serpent had no sway over it. For this reason, Mordechai, who the Gemora teaches (Chullin 139b) is alluded to in the section in the Torah which lists the spices in the anointment oil (Shemos 30:23), is connected to the theme of smell and was able to overcome Haman. However, my brother-in-law Yonah Sklare points out that the connections between Haman and this episode in the Torah run much deeper than this. While the Gemora teaches that Haman corresponds to Adam's sin of eating from the forbidden fruit, the Vilna Gaon adds that the relationship between Achashverosh and Vashti parallels the relationship between Chava and the serpent. Rashi writes (3:1) that the serpent was motivated by Chava's beauty and had a goal of engaging in relations with her. Similarly, Chazal teach (Megillah 12a) that Achashverosh and Vashti's intentions at their parties were to bring about immoral interactions between the drunken men and women whom they placed in close proximity. As a result of Chava's sin, man's eyes were opened and he needed to wear clothes since he was embarrassed by his previously-acceptable state (3:7). Not surprisingly, the Gemora teaches (Megillah 12b) that Achashverosh called Vashti to appear before him without any clothing. At the end of the first chapter of the Megillah (Esther 1:22), Haman convinced Achashverosh to decree that every man should rule in his home, which is remarkably similar to the curse that Hashem gave Chava (3:16) that as a result of her enticing Adam to sin, husbands would rule over their wives. A critical component of the miracle of Purim was wine. Not surprisingly, one of the opinions in the Gemora (Berachos 40a) about the identity of the forbidden fruit is that it was a grape. How do we understand this conceptually? We know that Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the tree of wisdom, but what exactly is wisdom? The Ramban writes (2:9) that wisdom is desire. Before man ate from the forbidden fruit, he had no independent desires and wanted nothing except to do Hashem's Will. Now that Adam sinned by eating from the forbidden fruit, we have our own desires which aren't always congruent with the Torah. What does wine have to do with this? Wine takes away our inhibitions and enables us to express our deepest personal desires. We see in the Megillah that the inner desire of Haman and Achashverosh was to be anti-Semitic and to destroy the Jews, but we also celebrate that even after the sin of eating from the forbidden fruit, the true inner desire of every Jew is to do Hashem's Will. Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the forbidden fruit which taught us the difference between good and evil, so on Purim we are obligated to drink to the point that we can no longer differentiate between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai. Not surprisingly, the Gemora teaches (Shabbos 88a) that Purim is the Yom Tov when the Torah which was originally accepted under duress at Mount Sinai when Hashem lifted the mountain above them like a barrel and threatened them with extinction was now lovingly and willingly reaccepted in the times of Achashverosh, because that is the true inner desire of every Jew.

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of the festival, Simchat Torah, begins on Thursday evening, September 26th and continues through Friday, September 27th.

from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org> via njop.ccsend.com
reply-to: ezbuchwald@njop.org date: Mon, Sep 23, 2013 at 5:17 PM subject:
Weekly Torah Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
Bereshith 5774-2013

**“Beginning at the Beginning—Again”
by, Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

As we begin the study of the Torah once again, it seems appropriate to attempt to clarify the purpose of Torah study.

The Torah was not written to provide a scientific perspective on life. Nor was it intended to serve as a cosmological or historical document, or to entertain Bible students with intriguing and wondrous stories and tales.

The Torah’s not-so-simple purpose is to serve as an educational, religious, ethical and national source of inspiration for the Jewish people specifically, and for greater humanity in general.

The Torah’s primary function is to record and confirm the establishment of the covenant between G-d, the Jewish people and the land of Israel. This covenant, which was concluded between the Al-mighty and the Children of Israel at the Revelation at Sinai, is recorded in the book of Exodus. Everything that precedes the Revelation is intended to serve as an introduction to understanding how the covenant came to be. Therefore, the book of Genesis relates, in profuse detail, the story of the patriarchs and matriarchs, in order to explain the origins of our people, as well as how the foundations of the covenant between G-d and the children of Abraham were established.

The story of creation itself is intended to teach both the background of the Jewish people, and their early interface with the rest of humankind.

The book of Genesis is thus divided into two parts. The first part, from Genesis 1 through 11, speaks of the creation of the world, the creation of human beings and the history of early civilization from the time of Adam until Abraham. This serves as a prologue to the great story of the covenant that G-d first made with Abraham.

The second part of the book of Genesis, from Genesis 12 through the end of Genesis, is a record of the history of the patriarchs and matriarchs from whom the nation of Israel eventually emerged. At first, it seems unclear why the Torah would devote fully 39 chapters to the history of the forefathers, a period of only 3 generations, while the history of humankind, from Adam to Abraham, a period of 20 generations, is covered in only 11 chapters. We soon realize that the history of the patriarchs is far more important to understanding the overall purpose of the Torah, whereas the history of humankind provides a general historical overview, with few theological implications.

The well-known question cited by Rashi confirms the centrality of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people as the major theme and purpose of the Torah.

The very first verse of Genesis underscores this special relationship.

Genesis 1:1 states, “Bereshit barah Eh’lo-kim ayt ha’sha’ mayim, v’ayt ha’ah’retz.” In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. Rashi immediately cites the question of Rabbi Yitzchak in the Midrash. The Torah, says Rabbi Yitzchak, should not have begun with the story of creation, but rather with the verse (Exodus 12:1), “Ha’chodesh ha’zeh la’chem,” This month shall be for you the beginning of the month. This verse, after all, introduces the first commandment which the Jewish people were commanded as a nation—to keep the month of Nisan.

Rashi responds that the reason the Torah opens with Bereshith is because the Al-mighty wished to convey the message of the power of His godly acts to His people, lest the nations of the world come to Israel and say, “You are bandits for conquering the land of the seven nations that belongs to us!” Because the Bible opens with the story of creation, the people of Israel can now respond to the nations’ claims by declaring that the whole earth belongs to G-d. He created it and he gave it to whomever He found proper. Obviously, it was G-d’s desire to give the land first to the nations, and then to take it from them and give it to the Jewish people.

Rashi’s response returns us to the major theme of the Torah. The Torah began with the word “Bereshith” in order to underscore the special bond between G-d, the people of Israel and the land of Israel. It is a bond that we must treasure and protect.

There is no greater way for Israel to treasure and protect the bond between the Al-mighty and His people, than for Jews to study Torah.

May you be blessed.

The intermediary days of Sukkot (Chol HaMoed) are observed through Wednesday, September 25th. On Wednesday evening, the festival of Shemini Atzeret commences, and is celebrated on Thursday, September 26th. The final day

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Is There a Mitzvah to Arrange Shidduchim?

Rabbi Michael Taubes

Does anyone in the broader Jewish community not know of somebody who wishes to get married but has as yet been unsuccessful in finding a suitable spouse? It would seem fairly obvious to any sensitive human being that if one does know of such a person, one should do whatever one can to be of assistance in his or her quest for the right match.

The question is, is there an actual “mitzvah,” in the precise sense of the term, which is performed when one does so? And if so, what mitzvah is it? Upon whom is it incumbent? The following presentation puts forth a number of classic Torah sources which point to the suggestion that there is in fact a mitzvah to help arrange shidduchim; it is hoped that this will serve to encourage those who are committed to the observance and fulfillment of mitzvot to become further sensitized to this issue and to get involved in helping those seeking to get married to achieve their goal and build additional batei ne’eman beYisrael.

Areivut – Responsibility for a Fellow Jew In one of the two sections of the Torah known as the Tochachah, which presents a list of the punishments which will unfortunately be visited upon the Jewish people should they fail to properly observe the laws of the Torah, the verse states: *Vikashlu Ish Beachiv KiMipnei Cherev Viradav Ayin*, meaning that people will stumble over one another and fall as if fleeing an attack, even though there is in fact no pursuer (*Vayikra 26:37*). Understood in context, as explained there by Rashi (s.v. *Kemipenei*), this description is one of panic and confusion, of the pervasive sense of terror when people are running for their lives. The Gemara, however, singling out the first phrase of this verse, derives from it a general concept:

“A man will stumble over his brother” — [this means that] a man will stumble because of the sin of his brother; this teaches that all [Jews] are guarantors [and thus responsible] for one another. *Sanhedrin 27b*

The famous and oft-quoted idea that every Jew has some sort of responsibility, as a kind of guarantor, for every other Jew, known in general as the principle of “areivut,” is thus rooted in this notion that a person can potentially be brought down himself on account of the inappropriate behavior of somebody else, a fellow Jew (see Rashi to that Gemara, s.v. *Ish Be’achiv*).

The Gemara elsewhere teaches this lesson even more poignantly and clarifies the circumstances under which it is applied. The context there is a discussion about what one may and may not allow one’s animal to wear outside on Shabbat, as related to the prohibition against carrying or otherwise transporting items from one place to another on Shabbat. The Mishnah (*Shabbat 54b*) declares that R. Elazar ben Azaryah permitted his cow to go out on Shabbat wearing a certain kind of garment in opposition to the ruling of the rabbis. Finding it difficult to believe that such a great sage would in fact do such a thing, the Gemara comments:

It was taught [in a Beraita]: It was not [actually] his [i.e., R. Elazar ben Azaryah’s] cow, but rather it was [the cow] of his neighbor, but because he did not protest against her [action, and try to correct her behavior] it was identified with his name. Rav and R. Chanina and R. Yochanan and Rav Chaviva taught: ... Whoever has the ability to protest against [the inappropriate behavior of] the members of his household but did not protest is punished [himself] for [the sins of] the members of his household. [And whoever has the ability to protest] against [the inappropriate behavior of] the people of his town [but did not protest] is punished [himself] for [the sins of] the people of his town. [And whoever has the ability to protest] against [the inappropriate behavior of the people in] the whole world [but did not protest] is punished [himself] for [the sins of the people in] the whole world. *Shabbat 54b*

In short, we learn from here the remarkable notion that a Jew who sees a fellow Jew or group of Jews violating any precept and has the opportunity and the wherewithal to prevent the deed from being done, but instead fails to intervene, is held accountable as if he himself had committed that particular transgression. It is noteworthy that the Rambam (*Hilchot Teshuvah 4:1*), in a comprehensive list of various behaviors that prevent the person who engages in any one of them from being able to do teshuvah in a complete and proper fashion, includes among them not objecting when confronted with the chance to stop others from sinning.

Strikingly, though, the Rambam there also mentions that the same is true of one who prevents others from performing a mitzvah. While the simple reading of that Rambam indicates that he is referring to someone who deliberately stops others from fulfilling a mitzvah, R. Moshe Schick, in one of his teshuvot, takes this idea a step further, saying:

A person is also obligated, if possible, to assist his friend so that he will [be able to] do a mitzvah; one is obligated in this based on areivut. The Rambam in Hilchot Teshuvah enumerates this among the twenty-four things that prevent [proper] teshuvah; one of them is stopping one's friend from doing a mitzvah ... for it is a mitzvah to assist one's friend [in the performance of a mitzvah] because of areivut. Shu"t Maharam Schick, Orach Chaim #322

Because one is, in his view and in his understanding of the Rambam, actually obligated to enable someone else to perform a mitzvah, R. Schick discusses the possibility there that one can be forced by the local beit din (rabbinical court) to allow somebody else to use his sukkah when he needs it on Sukkot. Irrespective of his conclusion regarding that particular question, though, R. Schick is clearly of the opinion that not only may one not prevent someone else from performing a mitzvah, but that there is also a mitzvah, based on the principle of areivut, to actively help someone else perform a mitzvah which is incumbent upon him.

This is by no means a lone view among the poskim. The Aruch HaShulchan, for example (Orach Chaim 655:3), allows an etrog to be brought by a non-Jew from one town to a second town when the latter has none available for people's use on Sukkot (a situation which, while difficult to conceive of today, was not uncommon at one time in Europe). Although it is generally rabbinically forbidden to ask a non-Jew to do such a thing on Yom Tov, that prohibition is suspended in order to enable people to perform a mitzvah; the Aruch HaShulchan concludes there that one is indeed obligated to assist others in their performance of a mitzvah based on the aforementioned concept of areivut.

The Mishnah Berurah, in likewise ruling that one may do what is necessary to enable another Jew to be able to fulfill the mitzvah of taking an etrog on Sukkot, states succinctly: For we are commanded because of areivut to see to it that a fellow Jew will do the mitzvot of the Torah, and if [any fellow Jew] will lack [the opportunity to perform a mitzvah] it is as if I am lacking it. Shaar HaTziyun, 655:5

Clearly, then, these authorities maintain that based on the principle of areivut, there is indeed an obligation, categorized as a mitzvah, to do what one can so that others will be able to perform a mitzvah which they wish to perform. It would thus seem that involving oneself in making shidduchim, arranging for prospective marriage partners to get together and ultimately, if all goes well, to get married, is actually a full-fledged mitzvah; the Shach in fact writes clearly (Choshen Mishpat 73:22) that one is considered to be doing an actual mitzvah himself when trying to arrange a marriage for others.

R. Yaakov Ettlinger, in his commentary to the Gemara in Sukkah, goes so far as to say that this mitzvah may be biblical in nature:

Since all Jews are responsible for one another, then one who enables his friend to fulfill a biblical mitzvah is himself also considered to be involved in the performance of a biblical mitzvah ... Aruch LaNeir to Sukkah 25a, s.v. Hacha Tarid

R. Ettlinger therefore posits that from the fact that the Gemara later in Sukkah (25b-26a) exempts a groom's attendant and other members of a wedding party from certain mitzvot based on the well-known maxim that one who is involved in the performance of one mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah at that time (Haosek Bimitzva Patur Min Hamitzva), one cannot infer that this maxim applies even when the first mitzvah is only rabbinically mandated, because those assisting someone in his marriage arrangements are considered to be performing a biblically mandated mitzvah. The same may well be true of someone who works to help someone else meet a suitable spouse and eventually get married, assuming, as the Shach said, that one who does so is considered to be performing a mitzvah. This assumption that one is indeed considered to be doing a mitzvah when arranging shidduchim forms the basis of a comment by R. Yosef ben Lev in his Shu"t Mahari ben Lev (1:100; 99 in some versions) about whether one may accept money and if so, how much, for successfully matching a couple for marriage, given that he is indeed performing a mitzvah.

It may be noted at this point that according to Rabbeinu Saadyah Gaon, as understood by R. Yerucham Fischel Perlow (in the latter's encyclopedic commentary on the former's Sefer HaMitzvot, Parashah 57), the obligation, which he classifies as communal in nature, to assume responsibility for one's fellow Jew in terms of his mitzvah observance is in fact enumerated as one of the 613 commandments of the Torah; it may thus be argued that this is the mitzvah fulfilled when people work on arranging shidduchim for others.

The Mitzvah to Get Married and Have Children The premise underlying the aforementioned assertion that one performs a mitzvah by helping someone get married is that the person who gets married is indeed fulfilling a mitzvah himself (or herself) by so doing. Exactly which mitzvah is this? The Rambam writes: The 213th mitzvah is that we were commanded that one should have relations [with a woman] through [the acts qualifying as] "kiddushin" (defined as betrothal or engagement, the first stage of the marriage process) ... this [then] is the mitzvah of

kiddushin ... indeed it has already been explained that the mitzvah of kiddushin is from the Torah. Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Asei 213)

The Rambam is clearly of the opinion that there is a mitzvah to marry (see also his assertion in Hilchot Ishut 3:23 that the Birkhat Eirusin, the blessing recited at the beginning of the formal wedding ceremony, is like the blessing recited before the performance of any other mitzvah); this mitzvah is independent of the mitzvah to procreate, which he enumerates as a separate requirement (Sefer HaMitzvot ibid. 212). The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 552) concurs with this view. According to these sources, then, both of which cite a phrase from the Torah (Devarim 24:1) as the basis for their position, the matter is quite simple: there is a biblical mandate to get married and one who helps someone else get married is thus helping someone fulfill a mitzvah from the Torah; he is therefore considered to be performing a mitzvah himself by providing this help.

It is true, of course, that not all authorities agree with the Rambam and the Sefer HaChinuch that getting married constitutes an independent mitzvah. The Rosh, for example (Ketubot 1:12), maintains that there is no independent mitzvah to marry; there is a mitzvah to procreate ("peru u'revu"), and the proper way to do that is to first get married, but marriage alone does not constitute the fulfillment of any mitzvah (see there for his claim that the Birkhat Eirusin is thus not a blessing on a mitzvah, but a blessing of praise relating to the joyous occasion of the wedding). This dispute, however, does not at all impact the present discussion, because even if the mitzvah is not to marry but to procreate (with marriage being simply the appropriate vehicle via which one should ultimately have children), one who participates in arranging a marriage is still assisting someone in fulfilling a mitzvah from the Torah—the mitzvah to procreate—and he is therefore still considered to be performing a mitzvah himself by providing this assistance.

In line with this last idea, it is interesting to consider a statement in the Gemara in Shabbat (31a), according to which one of the questions that one is asked after his time on this earth is up and he is facing the Heavenly judgment is Asakta Bipirya Virivya" — "did you engage in procreation?" The Maharsha comments: The Gemara did not say [that one is asked] "did you fulfill [the mitzvah] of procreation," but rather "did you engage [in the mitzvah of procreation]," meaning, "[did you take steps] to marry off orphans." Maharsha, Chidushei Aggadot to Shabbat 31a, s.v. Asakta

The Maharsha clearly understands that being engaged in the mitzvah of procreation means more than fulfilling that mitzvah by having children oneself; it includes doing what one can to facilitate the fulfillment of that mitzvah by others, by people who are less fortunate and who may never have the opportunity to get married and perform this mitzvah without the efforts of others. One who helps someone else get married and thereby enables him to carry out the mitzvah of having children is thus fulfilling this requirement of "involvement" in procreation; even if procreation—and not getting married itself—is in fact the only actual mitzvah relating directly to marriage, one is therefore still involved in a mitzvah when providing this help. And this is considered so significant a deed that it is one of the first things one is held accountable for when he leaves this world.

From these sources, it would appear that the mitzvah of peru u'revu includes facilitating the opportunity for others to fulfill the mitzvah. Since one who does so may thus be said to be performing that very mitzvah in a way himself, this can be viewed as something beyond, or independent of, the broader notion of areivut discussed above. It should be noted that the Sefer Chareidim writes in general (end of Chapter 61 in the newer arrangement) that one who encourages others to perform a mitzvah is considered as having performed that very mitzvah himself.

This idea that one performs a mitzvah by enabling someone else to fulfill his mitzvah to procreate emerges as well from the comments of the Ran at the beginning of the second chapter of Kiddushin. The Gemara, explaining the opening line of the Mishnah there (Kiddushin 41a), teaches that while it is acceptable, as the Mishnah says, for a man getting married to appoint an

agent to carry out the technical act of giving his bride the item needed to effect the kiddushin, or the betrothal, the first step of the halachic marriage process, it is nonetheless a greater mitzvah for the man to do the act himself rather than through an agent (Mitzva Bo Yoser Mibeshlucho). In subsequently explaining the next line of the Mishnah, which states that a woman may likewise appoint an agent to receive the item that will effect the kiddushin, the Gemara says that it is similarly a greater mitzvah for the woman to receive the item herself rather than have an agent do it for her (Mitzva Bo Yoser Mibeshlucho). In view of the fact that the mitzvah to get married (according to those who hold that that is indeed an independent mitzvah), as well as the mitzvah to procreate, are mitzvot incumbent specifically upon men (though a woman's participation is obviously necessary), the question is, what does the Gemara mean by saying that it is a greater mitzvah for the woman to receive the item herself? What mitzvah is she performing? The Ran explains:

For even though a woman is not commanded in [the mitzvah of] procreation, she nevertheless has a mitzvah because she is helping the husband to fulfill his mitzvah. Ran to Kiddushin, 16a-b in Rif, s.v. Ika De'amri)

In the same way, then, arranging a shidduch may thus be at least a partial fulfillment of the mitzvah of peru u'revu.

There is also another possible mitzvah that might be fulfilled in this manner, a mitzvah that is similar to peru u'revu, but distinct from it. The prophet Yeshayah tells us: For so said Hashem, Creator of the heavens, He is the God, Former of the earth and its Maker, He established it; He did not create it for emptiness, [but] he [rather] formed it to be inhabited: I am Hashem and there is no other. Yeshayah 45:18

The earth is described here as having been created not to be empty and desolate, but to be inhabited and populated. Chazal infer from this statement that there is a mitzvah known as "shevet," from the word in that verse meaning inhabited, which requires one to help populate the world; one who has children is thus also fulfilling this mitzvah of shevet. It is clear from Tosafot in Gittin (41b, s.v. Lo tohu) and others that this mitzvah is operative even in situations where the mitzvah of peru u'revu is not; R. Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz, in his sefer known as the Makneh on Kiddushin (41a, s.v. Mitzvah), explains that this is the mitzvah which women, upon whom the mitzvah of peru u'revu is not incumbent, are included in when they get married, and it is that mitzvah to which the Gemara there refers when speaking of a mitzvah for women to get married. One who helps arrange a shidduch and thereby enables people to have children and populate the world may thus also be fulfilling, at least partially, this mitzvah of shevet, which, according to Tosafot in Avodah Zarah (13a, s.v. Lilmod), is ranked together with talmud Torah as a mitzvah which is of great importance. Along the above lines, it may be possible to suggest that there is in fact a communal responsibility to help someone find a spouse and ultimately have children. The Gemara earlier in Kiddushin (29a) teaches that there are a number of obligations that a father has concerning his son, including circumcising him, redeeming him (if he a firstborn), teaching him Torah and taking a wife for him, that is, helping him to get married. Regarding each of the first three cases, the Gemara (ibid. 29a-29b) questions why it is only the father, not the mother, who is required to take care of these matters for the son, and concludes that the mother is exempt because she is not obligated in that particular mitzvah herself, and thus does not have to see to it that it be performed by her son. Regarding helping him get married, though, the Gemara later (ibid. 30b), after indicating that a father must also see to it that his daughter gets married, does not say anything about the mother being exempt from this obligation. R. Yosef Engel, in his Gilyonei HaShas, posits that although the Gemara never says so, the fact is that the mother is indeed obligated in this case, and he adds that although she is exempt from the mitzvah of peru u'revu, she is included in the aforementioned mitzvah of shevet, and thus must likewise see to it that her children are able to fulfill this mitzvah.

We may now add that in view of the fact that just as in the case of circumcision, the Gemara (ibid. 29a) states that there is a requirement upon others in the community to get involved, if necessary, to see to it that the mitzvah gets done (a ruling accepted by the Rambam, Hilchot Milah 1:1, and the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 261:1), and likewise in the case of teaching Torah, others have a responsibility to get involved as well (as implied by the Sifrei to Devarim, No. 37, and cited by the Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2, and the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 245:3), then perhaps the same is true of marrying off a child. If the parents—or the child himself or herself—are unable to arrange for the child's marriage, it becomes incumbent upon other members of the community to get involved and help see to it that the child gets married and will thus be able to fulfill whatever mitzvot that entails, and those who do so have some share in the performance of those mitzvot, as discussed above.

Assisting HaKadosh Baruch Hu & Emulating Him (Imitatio Dei)

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah (68:4; it appears as well in Vayikra Rabbah 8:1) relates a fascinating story regarding a certain noblewoman and the great Tanna R. Yose bar Chalafta. Aware of the fact that according to the Torah, G-d created the world in six days (Shemot 20:11), the noblewoman asked the Tanna what He has been doing since then. He replied that G-d spends His time arranging shidduchim, carefully matching people with suitable spouses. Assuming that there really is not much to this, the noblewoman proclaimed that she could accomplish that herself; as a rich woman she had many, many servants, both male and female, and she said that in a short period of time she could easily join each male with a female and thereby accomplish without much effort what G-d seems to find so difficult. After R. Yose bar Chalafta challenged her to go and try it, she did so and indeed paired together all her male and female servants in one night. The next morning, however, she was overwhelmed with the complaints of her servants, as so many of the new couples were in fact completely incompatible; the noblewoman subsequently

acknowledged G-d's greatness to R. Yose bar Chalafta. Aside from whatever else may be learned from this story, one point that emerges is that G-d Himself spends much time, as it were, "working on" arranging appropriate shidduchim.

It is perhaps for this reason that the Gemara in Shabbat refers to arranging marriages as "??r ??W, the business of Heaven. The verse in Yeshayah (58:13) teaches that we are to refrain on Shabbat from doing our own business, from engaging in our own affairs, and from even talking about such things. The Gemara states: And a Tanna of the academy of Menasheh taught: We may arrange for girls to be betrothed [and subsequently married] on Shabbat, and for a child to be taught a text or to be taught a trade. [This is all permitted on Shabbat because] the verse states: [Refrain on Shabbat] from engaging in your own business and speaking words [about such business; this implies that doing] your own business is forbidden. [but] the business of Heaven [i.e., an activity related to a mitzvah] is permitted. Shabbat 150a

In other words, one may be engaged in and discuss activities that are mitzvah-oriented on Shabbat, as they are labeled as Cheftzei Shamayim, the business of Heaven, and not personal business; the primary example of such an activity which is in the category of Cheftzei Shamayim is arranging marriages. Actually, the issue of the permissibility of talking about shidduchim on Shabbat is the subject of a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai in an earlier Gemara there (ibid. 12a), but the halachah follows the view of Beit Hillel that it is indeed permissible, as codified by the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 24:5) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 306:6), because it is included among the Cheftzei Shamayim. It would appear that this permission extends even to discussing the financial components of the marriage arrangement, as this is not considered a personal business matter, but a matter relating to a mitzvah, "the business of Heaven" (see the comments of, among others, the Kaf HaChaim there, no. 50, regarding this last point).

According to this presentation, it may be suggested that working on arranging a shidduch is a mitzvah not only between man and fellow man (bein adam lichavero) as it would more obviously seem to be, but also between man and G-d (bein adam laMakom), as doing so is a means of assisting G-d in taking care of His business, as it were. Moreover, it would appear that G-d gets involved Himself in this activity because getting married is considered to be on par with only Torah study in terms of its relative significance. The Gemara in Megillah (27a), for example, teaches that a Sefer Torah may not be sold for any reason other than to enable one to study Torah or to get married; the Rambam (Hilchot Sefer Torah 10:2) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 270:1 and Even HaEzer 1:2) rule accordingly. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah (13a) similarly equates getting married with Torah study regarding a different halachah, also cited in the Rambam (Hilchot Avel 3:14) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 372:1). If, as indicated by these sources, along with the aforementioned Midrash, getting married is such an important value that G-d Himself chooses to spend time helping enable people to do so, it certainly stands to reason that it behooves others to assist in doing "G-d's work."

In addition to the above point, though, there may be yet another motivation for people to get involved in arranging shidduchim in light of G-d's involvement in this matter, a motivation based on yet another mitzvah. The Torah (Devarim 13:5) clearly instructs us to "follow" G-d, something that, on the surface, seems an impossible task. The Gemara therefore explains what this means:

And R. Chama the son of R. Chanina said: What is [the meaning of] that which is written: "G-d, your Lord you shall follow" — is it possible for a person to [actually] follow the Divine Presence? For has it not already been said: "For G-d, your Lord—He is a consuming fire" [which cannot be "followed" by a human being]? Rather, [the Torah in the initial verse means to teach that one must strive] to follow [or emulate] the attributes [and the behavior] of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Just as He clothes the naked ... you too should clothe the naked. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, visited the sick ... you too should visit the sick. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, comforted mourners ... you too should comfort mourners. [Just as] the Holy One, Blessed is He, buried the dead ... you too should bury the dead. Sotah 14a This is the idea known as imitatio Dei, imitating, or emulating, the behavior of G-d and doing the kinds of things that He does to the best of our ability.

Another verse in the Torah (Devarim 28:9) similarly teaches that people must "go in G-d's ways" (Vihalachta Bidrachav); the Rambam, based on a Gemara in Shabbat (133b) explains this mitzvah as follows:

They [i.e., the Sages] learned the following in explaining the meaning of this mitzvah: Just as He is considered gracious, so too should you be gracious. Just as He is considered compassionate, so too should you be compassionate. Just as He is considered holy, so too should you be holy. And in this manner the prophets referred to G-d by all the various appellations [such as] "Slow to Anger and Abundant in Kindness," "Righteous and Just," "Perfect," "Mighty," and "Powerful" and others like them, to make known that these are good and just modes of behavior and that a person is obligated to conduct himself in accordance

with them and to emulate Him to the best of his ability. Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 1:6

If, then, it is true that G-d arranges marriages, as an expression of His kindness, then based on this mitzvah to emulate Him we are obligated to do the same. Indeed, R. Yitzchak Zvi Leibovitch, in his work on Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer entitled Shulchan HaEzer (3:1, in the side commentary called Simlah LeTzvi) specifically links acting as the go-between to help someone find an appropriate spouse with this mitzvah of emulating and cleaving to G-d, adding that the Torah itself was given to the Jewish people through the agency of a go-between. And in a similar vein, R. Yitzchak Lampronti, in his Pachad Yitzchak, an encyclopedia of Talmudic and rabbinic terms, writes (s.v. Zivugim) that there is a mitzvah to become involved in arranging shidduchim between suitable men and women; he too notes that the Torah was given through an intermediary and adds that HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself was the very first Shadchan. When one works at arranging a match, one is thus emulating the actions of G-d Himself.

Tzedakah and Gemillus Chessed

In addition to all of the above, it appears that there also may be an aspect of the mitzvah of tzedakah associated with helping arrange shidduchim. The Torah states regarding the obligation to give to those in need:

Rather, you shall open your hand to him and you shall grant him whatever suffices for his needs that he is [presently] lacking. Devarim 15:8

Rashi there (s.v. Lo) explains that this includes helping him find a wife. In other words, if what a person is lacking is not necessarily money or possessions, but a spouse, part of the mitzvah of tzedakah may be to help him find one. The Gemara in Ketubot (67b) teaches, citing this very verse, that when an orphan—who presumably is unable to afford the expenses associated with getting married and setting up a household—wishes to marry, it is incumbent upon others to provide him with whatever he needs in order to be able to do so; the Rambam (Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 7:4) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 250:1) rule accordingly. There is some debate as to whether this is a communal responsibility or whether the obligation devolves upon any individual who is able to help (see the comments of the Ramo there and of the Shach there No. 1, among other sources); the Torah Temimah to the above verse in Devarim (No. 27) makes a cogent argument that it is certainly required of an individual to be of assistance in such a case if he can be. Now, while the implication of this discussion is that the case is one where the orphan in question has already found a spouse and is just seeking help for the financial piece of the marriage, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that if the person needs help finding the actual spouse that assistance too should be provided for him.

Moreover, it may be suggested that even if a person is not at all poor or needy in economic terms, but is lacking in the sense that he (or she) is unable to find an appropriate match, the mitzvah of tzedakah may be in force to mandate that others help him acquire what he is lacking. And having brought up the mitzvah of tzedakah in this regard, it is worth recalling the statement of the Gemara in Bava Batra (9a) that in a way it is even greater for one to inspire others to give than to give himself, a notion accepted by the Rambam (Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 10:6) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 249:5). It would thus make sense for people not only to engage in arranging shidduchim themselves, but to inspire others to do the same.

Finally, and perhaps most simply, one who helps someone else find the proper mate and thus be able to get married and eventually have children is obviously doing a great act of kindness for that person. Even if there may perhaps be no direct, specific Scriptural source for doing this particular kindness for another person, the Rambam (Hilchot Avel 14:1) already makes it clear that various acts of loving-kindness done to help others which our Rabbis discuss are in fact included under the biblical precept of Viahavta Lireiacha Kamocha, And you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Vayikra 19:18), meaning that one should do for a fellow Jew everything that one would want others to do for him. It should be clear for this reason alone that one should make every effort to help those in need of finding an appropriate spouse.

In light of all of the above, it may be added that the directive to do for someone else whatever one would want done for himself would seem to be especially important if that which one does for the other person assists him in the performance of a mitzvah.

R. Moshe Schick, in the teshuvah cited above, thus writes:

To assist one's friend in a mitzvah matter is included [in the requirement] of doing acts of loving-kindness, for if it is a mitzvah to help him [by doing acts of] loving-kindness [directed toward] his physical well-being, then certainly it is a mitzvah to help him [be able] to do a mitzvah, through which he benefits [both] in this world and in the World to Come. Shu"t Maharam Schick, Orach Chaim #322

There is, then, perhaps a double mitzvah in the realm of gemillut chessed that one engages in by helping arrange shidduchim. There is the basic chessed done for a fellow Jew who is in need of help and there is the chessed which enables a fellow Jew to perform a mitzvah; what exactly that mitzvah is will depend upon the various views presented above.

In any case, though, it has been clearly demonstrated that one who is involved in arranging shidduchim can be said to be involved in any one—or perhaps all—of many possible mitzvot, even though it is understood that one's efforts will not always result in success. It is thus a noble pursuit for people committed to the performance of mitzvot to become active in whatever ways possible in the various programs, events and endeavors designed to bring people together for the purpose of establishing batei ne'eman beYisrael.

As a postscript, it is worth noting the meaning of the word “shidduch” as explained by the Ran, based on the Aramaic Targum of a verse in Shoftim (5:31):

[The word has] the linguistic connotation of quiet calm and serenity, [like that] which a woman finds in the home of her husband. Ran to Shabbat, 5b in Rif, s.v. ein meshadchin

It is to be hoped that those who are married are indeed able to achieve what may be understood as the inner peace of mind apparently suggested by this often-used word, and that those who are not yet married will experience it soon through their union with the suitable spouse that they will find, with the help of G-d and those working with Him.