

The Infinite Value of the Individual

Themes of *Sefer Bereshis*

Through the Commentary of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch

ALIT 2021 • Sarah Lipman

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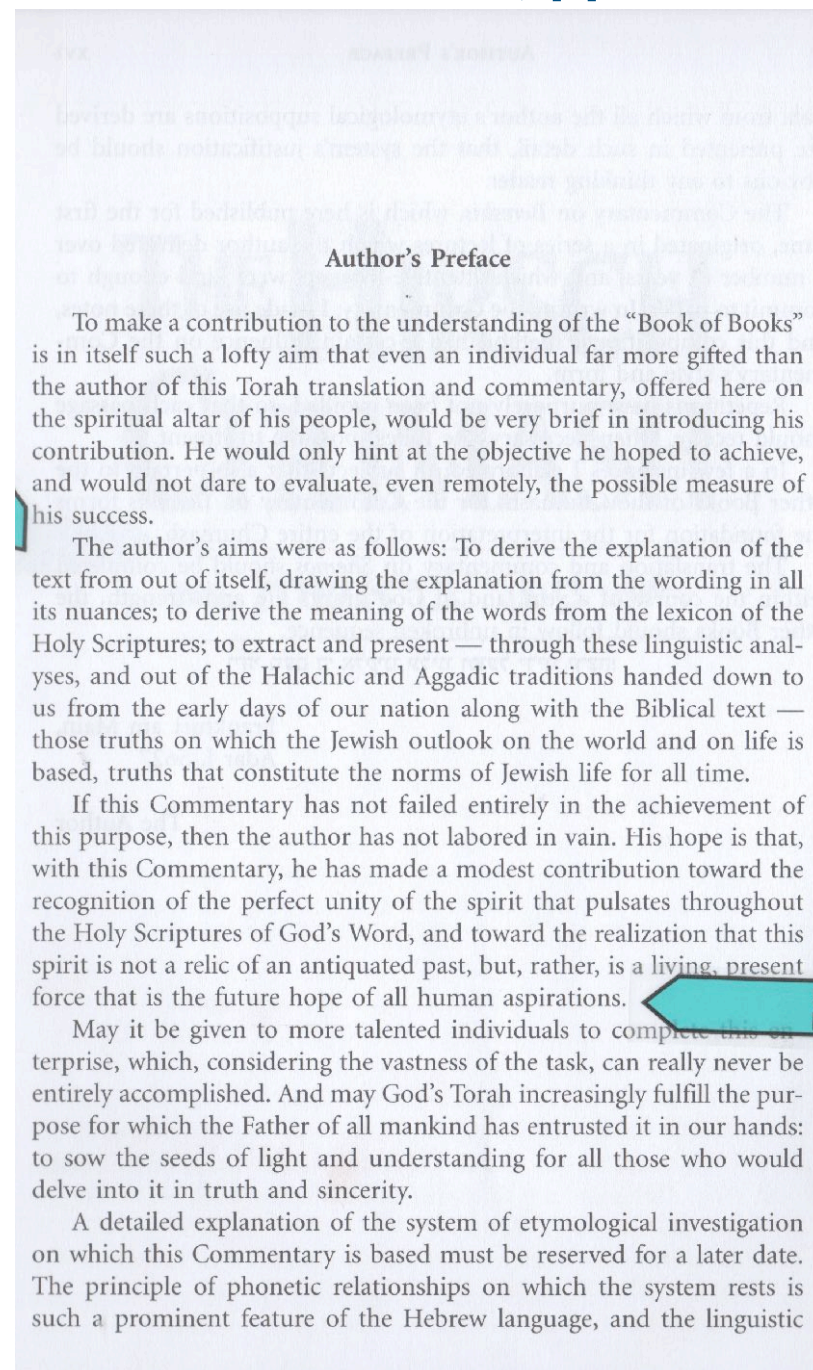
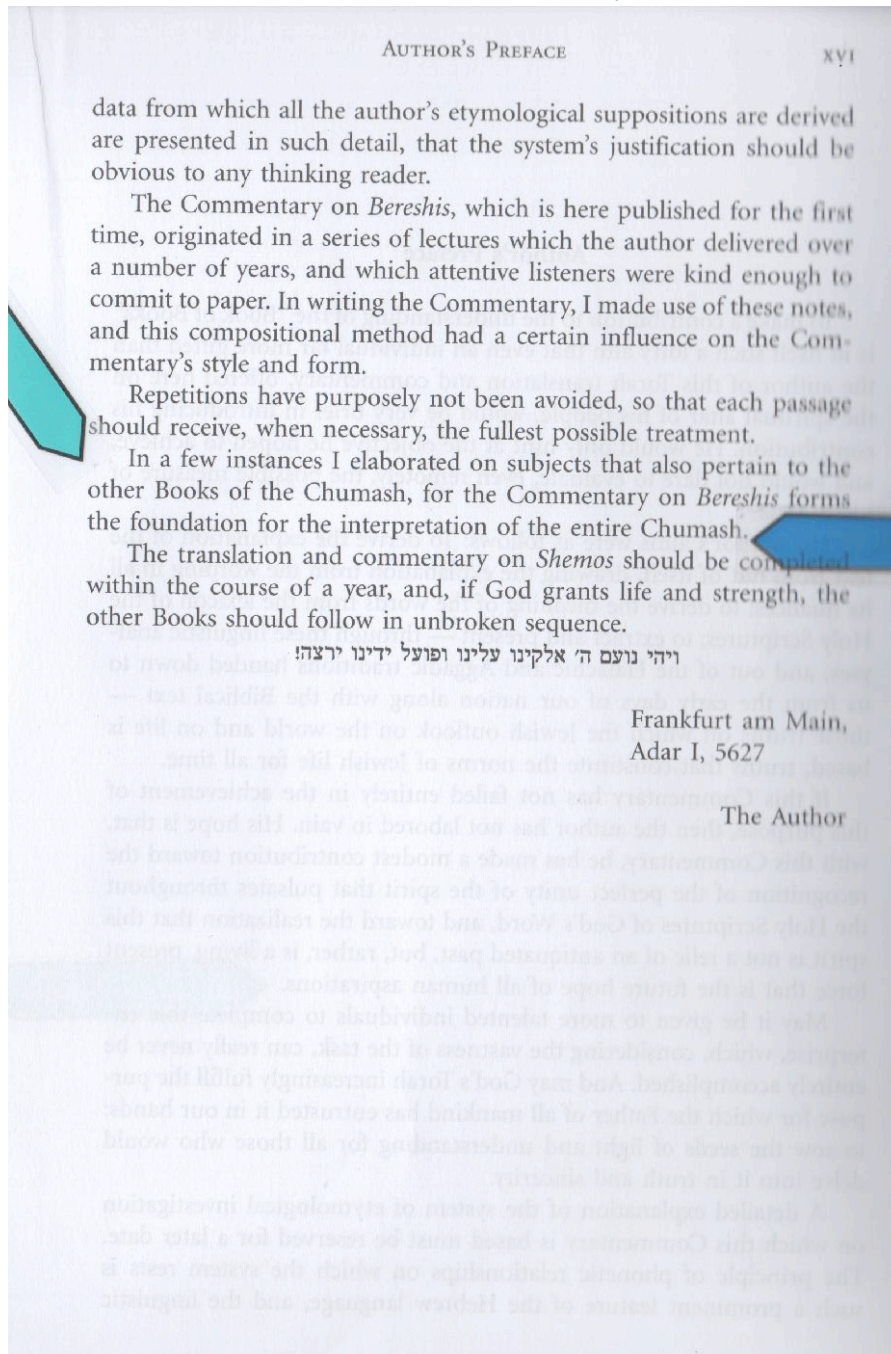
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The Hirsch Chumash, Bereshis • Feldheim-Judaica, pp XV-XVI



6. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning and saw them, and behold they were overcast.
 7. And he asked the court-

imprisoned, saw themselves, the one as butler, the other as baker, to the King, and the dreams hardly seemed dreams but almost as the interpretation of a dream". i.e. were so clear that they only seemed to lack one little point to make the meaning of the whole apparent and to require no interpreting. If, for example, instead of three vine branches, the butler had dreamt three days, everything would have been clear and understandable. But it was just this evasive clarity and the similarity of the dreams, and even the number three to seem stressed in both of them which made these dreams seem to have some relation to the impending fate, that caused them to grope uneasily for the meaning — פתר, (related to פטר, to open, not indeed a mechanical opening from outside, but an organic one out from inside, as פטור ציצים and פטר רחם) is a nice word for the interpretation of a dream, or for every reasonable explanation. A perfectly rational person can explain a dream quite exactly without wishing in any way to insist that it need necessarily come true. The meaning should not be read into it from outside but must come out from the dream itself. Such an interpretation of a dream is a deep psychological task, just as the explanation of any symbol, the hermeneutic interpretation of any passage of Scripture should be פתרון, getting at the sense from within outwards. The veriest hodge-podge can always be placed into everything, but to seek out the meaning from within (hence also the term דרש) produces just the one, the right one. And just as at organic birth and at the unfolding of every bud, there is an inner point of force from which the whole development takes its course, so at every "closed" symbolism there is one kernel, one central idea which has only once to be grasped, for all the rest to be understood and follow naturally.

V. 6. צעיה, related to צעה from which we get צעיה, the veil. צעיה, external veiling of the face, זעיה, the veiling of the countenance from within. The appearance of a troubled face is as if something there was asleep, dead; the soul, the life is missing from it, its ordinary expression of liveliness is veiled.

V. 7. How many words are superfluous in the first half of this verse! Almost as many as there are words. The whole rigmarole of the two co-prisoners is repeated, וישאל אותם would have been quite sufficient. Their personalities are well enough known to us already. But, unless we are entirely mistaken, just here the mental genius, the חכמה of Joseph

3. And he put them in ward, in the house of the prince of the cooks, into the prison, the place where Joseph was imprisoned.
 4. The prince of the cooks appointed Joseph to be with them, and he ministered unto them, and they were in ward for a period of days.
 5. And they dreamed a dream both of them, each one his dream in the same night, each one as an interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt who were imprisoned in the prison.

of the worst slave, entirely dependent on the whim of the favour of the King. The King holds the freedom and life of these "princes" in his hand as if they were — and indeed they are — his chattels. To him they are no princes, just a butler and a baker. He is their absolute master and at the slightest provocation they get kicked into the dungeon.

V. 3. במשמר. The place of detention of the מקושש (the desecrator of the Sabbath in Num. XV,32 I.L.) is also called משמר, only on remand. In the house of the prince of the cooks, there was a dungeon. They were given into his charge. He could keep them where he pleased. See above on V,20.

V. 5. Everything which is written beyond ויחלמו חלום שניהם seems entirely superfluous. "Each one dreamt his dream", "the dream was like its explanation", of course, for the explanation must go according to the dream. Finally "the butler etc." why repeat, we know quite well who they were. But it seems we are told all these particulars of the dreams because it was just these that made them uneasy. In the dreams themselves there was nothing extraordinary. That the butler dreamt he was preparing wine and offering it to the King, which he had probably been doing for the last thirty years, and similarly the baker, what was there in that that it should require interpretation? But the definiteness of the dreams and the similarity of them both in one night, struck them. Both dreams seemed to be the same, each one engaged again in the old occupation. "Each one dreamt his dream in the same night, the two of them who were now

The Hirsch Chumash, Bereshis 1:1 • Feldheim-Judaica, pp 1-3

1 בראשית א בראשית

1-1 *From the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:
נִרְבְּתִי

בראשית
CHAPTER 1

1 בראשית ברא אלקים. ראש is phonetically related to רעש and רחש, both of which denote movement; רעש denotes spatial movement, whereas רחש denotes inner movement. Accordingly, ראש is the source of movement, the origin of all outer and inner movement. Hence, ראשית means a beginning of movement — a beginning in time, not in space. The beginning of a space is called קצה, and likewise the end of a space is called קצה; for the two extremities can be beginning or end, depending on the standpoint of the onlooker.

Our verse, then, means: “In the beginning of all existence, it was God Who created”; or, if we add to the predicate the two objects that follow: “From the very beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” In any event, “בראשית” proclaims that nothing existed prior to God’s act of creation, and that heaven and earth were created only through God’s Word. Scripture thus teaches us that the world was brought into existence from nonexistence, יש מאין. This constitutes the basis of the conviction that the Torah seeks to instill within us.

The opposite notion is the belief in the eternity of the world, which is the cornerstone of pagan belief until this very day. This belief is not only a metaphysical falsehood, a misrepresentation of the origin of the universe, but even worse: it undermines all morality, and denies all freedom in both God and man. If matter had antedated Creation, then the Creator of the universe would have been able to fashion from the material given Him not a world that was absolutely good, but only the best world possible within the limitations of the material. In that case, all evil — natural and moral — would be due to the inherent faultiness of the material, and not even God would be able to save the world from evil, natural or moral. God would not be master over the material of the world, and man would not be master over his body. Freedom would

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for all these are called *ראשית*; and we can also understand the saying: *הקב"ה היה מביט בתורה ובורא העולם* (ibid. 1:1). Israel and Moshe began a new phase in the development of history, and therefore are called *ראשית*; or they represent the first realization of the ideal of man's creation — the first fruits, as it were, of God's harvest — and therefore are called *ראשית*. Through *הלה*, *מעשר*, and *ביכורים* we return the world with homage to its Creator. The Torah is the foundation stone of the structure that God wished to set up through Creation; hence, it, too, is called *ראשית* (ibid.). All these aims, though realized only later, were ensured from the time of Creation, for the world was created *בראשית*, wholly by God's Word, and from its very inception it was formed for these sublime aims. Indeed, God looked into the Torah and created the world.

We see, then, that *בראשית* is the foundation of our awareness of God, world, and man. When man lost this awareness, it had to be reestablished. This was the purpose of the revealed miracles: to demonstrate God's free and unbounded mastery over the world with all its elements, forces and laws. Indeed, these miracles were literally *נסים*, emblems raised on high. They restored man's faith in a free and unlimited God. As we have stated, this faith is the basis for all moral and human consciousness, and is the cornerstone of our whole relation to the Torah.

ברא is related to *ברח*, *ברה*, *פרח*, *פרא*, *פרע* — which denote aspiration to emerge, emergence from potentiality into actuality, or release from bondage. Accordingly, *ברא* denotes bringing to light, actualizing and bringing something out into external reality. In Aramaic, too, *ברא* means "outside," "that which is outside." *ברא*, then, means to carry out and actualize a thought, which is hidden in the inner recesses of the mind. *ברא* denotes creation, preceded only by thought and will. This is precisely the concept of creation *יש מאין*. Accordingly, "*בריאה*" is applied only to God's creation. Before the world existed, this creation had existed only as a thought in the mind of the Creator — to speak in human terms. The act of Creation actualized this thought and brought it out into reality, giving it an external, concrete existence. The entire world, as a whole and in all of its parts, is nothing but the materialized thought of God. This idea presents itself also in the root *היה*, the Jewish term for being (see v. 2).

This meaning of *ברא* — to become external, concrete, tangible — is related to another meaning of *ברא*: being healthy and stout. And from

vanish, and the whole world, including its God and the men who live in it, would be propelled by a blind, immutable fate.

This bleak conception of God, world, and man is dispelled by the light of the Torah with its very first words (*פתח־דְּרָגִיד יְאִיר*; *Tehillim* 119:130): *בראשית ברא אלקים*! Everything that follows hinges on these words. Everything — the matter and form of all that exists — was created by the free, almighty Creator. And the Creator still rules freely over the matter and form of every existing thing, over the forces that act upon matter, over the laws by which these forces operate, and over the resulting forms. For the free and almighty Will of God created matter and caused these forces to act upon it, and His Will set the laws by which forms are fashioned.

And just as God rules freely over His world, so has He made man master over his small world. God breathed into man a spark of His Own free essence, so that man should freely master his body and its forces. Thus, He created man in His image, in the free image of the free God; He placed man as an image of God in a world governed by His omnipotence.

The world that was created *בראשית* is not the best one that can be fashioned with the given material; rather, it is the only good world. This world — with all its seeming flaws — corresponds with the wise plan of the Creator; He could have created a different world, had such a world corresponded with His Will. Man who was created *בראשית* — with all his moral shortcomings — has the ability to attain the moral perfection set before him by the Creator. The possibility of sinning is part of his moral perfection; it is a basic condition for his moral freedom. Both, the world and man, will reach the highest ideal of the good, for which both were created. They will achieve this level of good because God, Who has placed this goal before them, has created them both for this goal, in accordance with His free and unlimited Will. He could have created a different creation, a different world and a different man, had this served the purpose that He set before them in freedom.

This is a truth of which we remind ourselves continually in the *קדיש* prayer, in which we express our deep faith that His great Name will be recognized and sanctified in the world *כרעותיה* *די ברא כרעותיה*, which He has created according to His Will.

In this sense, we can also understand the words of our Sages: *בזכות* *ישראל בזכות משה בזכות חלה מעשר וביכורים נברא העולם* (*Bereshis Rabbah* 1:4),

new world, a world in which man is to be educated to God. This day, too, is a “first day,” but on a higher level now. On this day, spiritual light was created, the light of recognition of God. But its “fourth day” is lacking; it lacks light-bearers: אין לו בן זוג. Only with the creation of Israel, the *eighth* work of creation, did this spiritual light, too, receive its bearers. As the Sages put it: כנסת ישראל היא בן זוגך (ibid. 11:8).

With the fifth day we enter the world of living creatures. God’s *Word* leads us to the seashore, shows us water and air, and says: “God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with living creatures that move, and let birds fly over the earth before the vault of the sky.’”

שרץ is phonetically related to שרש and זרו. The basic meaning of all these is vigorous, driving movement. שרץ exceeds the others, in that it has the letter צ, which denotes an overcoming of external obstacles. שרץ, then, means: something that is capable of independent movement, a living thing. Indeed, independent movement is the identifying mark of all life. Any tiny thing that exhibits independent movement thereby declares itself a living creature. Accordingly, שרץ primarily denotes the lower creatures, for their life particularly manifests itself to us through independent movement.

Whereas שרץ denotes independent movement as it appears externally, נפש is the inner cause of such movement. (נפש is related to נפץ, which means: to be completely detached from the body of the earth; see *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, p. 42.) The נפש is the very essence of a living thing, its individual essence in its absolute independence. The נפש is also the source of all movement. (Hence, נפש also means “will,” for the will is the inner source of all movement.) A creature possessing a נפש is a self-contained individual, and on a higher level is a personality. The נפש is the intangible element in every living being. It is separate from the material and does not integrate with the material. It is the constant element in the midst of the ever-changing material body. Were the נפש merely a part of the material, the identity of the individual would dissolve with the constant change of the material. Yet all living creatures remember and retain their impressions. This proves the existence of a permanent element amidst the changing material of the body. This element receives and retains impressions, and thereby is responsible for the continued existence of the individual.

The נפש is the inner identifying mark that distinguishes animal from

20 God said: Let the waters swarm with living things that move, and let birds fly over the earth before the vault of the sky.

ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שְׂרָצָה חַיָּה וְעוֹף יַעֲוֹף עַל-הָאָרֶץ עַל-פְּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם:

should always remember our redemption and sanctification and accept the yoke of His Torah. All these מועדים hinge on the months of the moon and the course of the sun. They direct our attention both to nature and to history, and show us the one God, Who guides both nature and history.

Thus the light-bearers serve לאותות ולמועדים — for the education of mankind and of Israel. This function, too, depends on the regular course of these bodies, which was set by the Creator. The command regarding the light-bearers — והיו לאותות ולמועדים — refers, then, to their historical message for mankind and for Israel.

We should not be surprised to find that the section on Creation — here [מועדים] and in the work of the third day [כלאים] — refers to *mitzvos* that will be given only much later. For all the *mitzvos* had already been taught orally to Israel — and most of the *mitzvos* were also practiced — during the forty years in the desert, and only later was the Written Law given, to preserve the Oral Law. The Written Law is a general outline of the complete Oral Law. One must always keep this in mind in order to correctly understand the nature of תורה שכתב, the written Word of God. When the section on Creation was given to the people of Israel, the מאורת already served them לאותות ולמועדים. This assumption of the future of Israel also explains the midrash of our Sages: The מאור הקטן is emblematic of Israel, who reckon by the moon; and the מאור הגדול is emblematic of the nations, who reckon by the sun (*Bereshis Rabbah* 6:3).

20 The first three days of Creation are related to the three days that follow. The light — created on the *first* day — was on the *fourth* day assigned its light-bearers, from which it can influence terrestrial life and growth. The expanses of water and air — created on the *second* day — were on the *fifth* day given their world of life. The dry land — which emerged and was adorned with vegetation on the *third* day — received its living inhabitants on the *sixth* day. The *seventh* day marks the beginning of a

Bereshis 1:26-28 • Translation from Hirsch Chumash, Feldheim-Judaica

(26) God said: **Let Us make an Adam (a deputy) in a form worthy of Us**, in keeping with Our image, and they shall exercise dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over animals and over the whole earth and over all creeping things that creep on the earth.

(27) **God created man in an image worthy of Himself**; He created him in a form worthy of God; He created them male and female.

(28) God blessed them and God said to them:

Be fruitful

and multiply

and fill the earth

and subdue it

and exercise your dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and every living creature that moves upon the earth.

(כו)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדּוּ
בְדִגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה

וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

(כז)

וַיְבָרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹקִים בָּרָא
אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

(כח)

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹקִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹקִים

פְּרוּ

וּרְבוּ

וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

*וּכְבֹּשׁוּ

וַיְרִדּוּ בְדִגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־תַּיִה הָרֶמֶשׂת
עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

of the nature of their rule: In issuing his orders, the sovereign is not acting according to his personal will or in his own personal interests. Rather, he regards himself as being bound up with his people; he issues decrees and edicts solely for the general good and the general welfare. Only as a representative of the people does he rule over them. So, too, in our verse, the Creator announces the rule of man — for the good of the world and out of concern for its destiny. And so we find, in the section on the scattering of the people of the world: הבה נרדה ונבלה שם (below, 11:7); the peoples are scattered for the benefit of their own future. Wherever God speaks in the plural, His intervention seems to spell restriction and retribution, but in reality brings salvation and deliverance.

אדם — see *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, pp. 52ff. There we cited grammatical and logical refutations of the usual understanding of the term **אדם**. **אדם** is not derived from **אדמה**, but on the contrary: **אדמה** is derived from **אדם**. Moreover, man is not defined by his earthliness. For his earthly origin is what he has in common with the other creatures, whereas the uniqueness of man is that he is *not* created entirely from the earth; the breath of God, breathed into his earthly frame — *that* is what makes him into man. The very fact that a grand announcement is made here testifies that the term **אדם** signifies man's exalted purpose. Other Scriptural passages also attest to this — e.g., וצפון צפוני צפון מרציתי (Yechezkel 34:31). The term **אדם** is certainly not conceived of here as a mere block of earth.

In our essay there, we noted the relation of **אדם** to **אדום**. Red light is the least refracted of all light. Indeed, this captures the essence of man: He is the closest manifestation of the Divine; and through him, God's Presence is revealed on earth.

Similarly, **אדם** is related to **הדום**, footstool. The inference is that man is **הדום**, the agent and bearer of God's glory on earth. **הדום** is to be distinguished from **במה**. A **במה** serves to elevate the lowly, whereas a **הדום** spares the exalted from having to place his feet on the earth. Had **אדם** not been appointed as **הדום**, God Himself would have to actualize all the truth and mercy, all the justice and love, that He wishes to be realized on earth. When man does the Will of his Creator, God is spared from having to descend to do His Will on earth. **אדם** is a **הדום** for the **הדום**, whereas **במה** is a **במה** for **אדם**.)

25 *God created the animals of the land according to their species, cattle according to its species, and every creeping thing upon the ground according to its species. And God saw that it was good.* כה וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינֵהָ וְאֶת כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:

26 *God said: Let Us make an Adam (a deputy) in a form worthy of Us, in keeping with Our image, and they shall exercise dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over animals and over the whole earth and over all creeping things that creep on the earth.* כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ בְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרַדְהוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-רֶמֶשׂ הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

and earth; his mind was free to think while he plowed his field and shepherded his flock. Thanks to the **בהמה**, man attained his spiritual height; **במתו** became **בהמתו**.

In contrast with the **בהמה** is the **חיה**, wild animals. The **חיה** does not submit to man; hence, it symbolizes self-contained, independent life, **חיים**.

רמש האדמה, **רמש**, are the lower creatures that creep on the ground. See above, v. 21.

26 All the other creatures are introduced by the narrative only at the moment of their actual creation. Man, however, is introduced *before* he is created. Creation is interrupted, as it were, and the Creator announces to the world His intention to create a "man," an "Adam." For this "Adam" will rule the world as its God-appointed ruler and leader. The world is now being prepared for its master's coming.

The use of the plural — **נעשה** — can also be understood in this sense. The use of the *pluralis majestatis*, the royal "we" employed by human sovereigns to proclaim their will to their subjects, is indicative

Similarly, אדם is related to חתם, to seal (this relation is indicated by the root אטם, to close). The inference is that man is the “seal” of God on creation; he is the “seal” through which the world can recognize its unseen Master.

Finally, אדם is related to דמה — with an individualizing א prefixed to it. The purpose of man is to be a likeness of God, but he is to effect this likeness through his own free and dynamic power. In other words, man is a representative and alter ego of God.

All these concepts are essentially one; as אדם, אדום, הדום, חוהם, and א-דם, man has but one purpose. Everything is capsulized by the concept of substitution. אדם, then, is a representative and deputy.

בצלמנו. We showed elsewhere (*Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, p. 54) that צלם — related to שלם (שלמה) and to סמל (שמלה) — denotes only the outer garment, the bodily form. בצלמנו, then, means “in Our garment.” That is to say, if all the love and compassion, all the truth and justice and holiness of God’s rule are to be embodied and encased in an external garment, they are to be encased in the garment that the Creator gave to man. Man’s bodily form already attests about him that he is a deputy of God; he is divinity on earth. Man’s form is —

כדמותנו; it is befitting of man, whose purpose is to be godlike. Another meaning of דמה is “to be silent.” This, then, is the concept of likeness reflected by the term דמה: Similar objects are “silent” toward one another — i.e., they do not, so to speak, express opposition one to the other and do not vocally contradict one another. (In modern languages as well, we find the concept of a *schreiende Gegensatz*, a “screaming” contrast.) Man’s task to resemble God is expressed, then, in a negative manner: In his whole being, there should be nothing that contradicts the Divine attributes, nothing that contradicts truth and love, justice and holiness. Man cannot become equal to God, but it is his duty to bear a resemblance to Him. There should be nothing within himself that contradicts the Divine attributes. Man’s mission is להתקדש, to strive ever upward in the levels of Divine holiness.

Our verse, then, means as follows: Let Us make a deputy in a form worthy of Us, as befitting for one who is destined to bear a resemblance to Us.

The Hirsch Chumash, Bereshis 1:28 • Feldheim•Judaica, pp 43-46

28 God blessed both of them, and He made both of them responsible for the fulfillment of mankind's mission.

lutely essential — even if viewed only from a physical standpoint. A human child has no chance of survival at all, if his parents do not provide him with care from the moment of his birth and do not continually promote his bodily well-being and development. Not the birth, but the *care* is the true cause of human increase.

But *רבה* includes more than this. The *parents* are obligated to reproduce themselves through their children: *They* must recur in the image of their children; and the children are to resemble their parents — not only physically, but spiritually and morally. The parents are to plant and nurture in their children the best of their spiritual and moral powers. In short, their duty is to *form* and *educate* their children spiritually and morally. Only then will they recur in the image of their children and fulfill the mitzvah of *רבו*.

This sense of the root *רבה* — training and educating — reappears in *רבה קשה*, shooting instructor, and *תרבות*, education, discipline, which is common especially in Rabbinic Hebrew; and it is likely that also the terms *רב* and *רבי* derive from this sense. For the main task of a teacher is to develop the student in his (the teacher's) spiritual image.

(Parenthetically, let us note the interesting relation of the root *רבה* to the roots *רהה* [saturate, soak] and *רפה* [lax, loose, becoming weak]. Indeed, wherever many people live together, each individual must limit himself, in order to leave room for the existence of the other. Only if many weak people are together is the individual strengthened by mutual assistance; but if many strong people are together, the individual is weakened by self-limitation. This phenomenon is reflected, perhaps, by a unique facet of the Hebrew language: A numeral in the feminine takes the masculine form, whereas a numeral in the masculine takes the feminine form. The concept of *רבה*, too — which is the focus of our attention here — implies *רפיין*: To educate always entails devotion to others through self-limitation. When a man becomes the father of a family, he ceases to be self-centered; he becomes *רפה*. His solicitous concern is for others. And the greater the devotion to others, the greater is the fulfillment of the mission, and the greater is the blessing.)

רבו, then, calls for the founding of the home and the family; only through them will human education succeed. Only when the mitzvah of *רבו* was received was the mitzvah of *פרו* given its high moral import. And even then, extra-marital births are deadly poison for mankind. For although in such a case a child is born to parents, the child is not raised

to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and exercise your dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and every living creature that moves upon the earth.

אֱלֹהִים פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלְאוּ אֶת־
הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹשׁוּהָ וּרְדוּ בְּדַגַּת הַיָּם
וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיַּה
הַרְמֵשֶׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

Whereas above, in verse 22, Scripture says: *ויברך אתם אלקים לאמר*, here it says: *ויברך אתם אלקים ויאמר להם אלקים*. As we indicated above: in the case of the living creatures that lack freedom of choice, the fulfillment is included in the blessing itself. The granting of the capacity to be fruitful and to multiply carries with it the realization in action. Reproduction and care for the young are purely natural acts. They are performed by instinctual drive whose source is in God's blessing; and they are performed under the compulsion of natural laws, as are all the other physical developments of the living organism. In the case of man, however, the blessing is separated from the fulfillment, the granting of the capacity is separated from its utilization for God's purposes. The fulfillment is required of man as a duty, and he is to carry it out — of his own free will. The natural act of the animal is transformed, in the case of man, into an act of moral freedom.

The four sections of man's mission — *פרו*, *רבו*, *מלאו את הארץ*, *וכבשו* — embody his whole free-willed moral development. *פרו* refers to *marriage*; *רבו* refers to the *family*; *מלאו* refers to *society*; and *וכבשו* refers to the *acquisition of property*.

פרו refers to *marriage*, the union of the sexes for production of human fruit — children. Just as the choice energies and saps of the tree become "free" in its fruit as an independent germ (see above, v. 11), so the noblest traits of godliness and humaneness of the father and mother unite to produce an independent human germ.

רבו refers to the *family*. *רבה* = to multiply. Begetting children is not sufficient in order for the human species to multiply. Even in the case of many species of animals, increase of the breed is dependent on care of the young; and in the case of the human species, such care is abso-

by parental love. He has parents, but he has no parental home, in which alone he can blossom into a man, an אדם.

מלאו refers to *society*. Every couple is obligated to make its contribution, so that the earth be full of human beings. Only when the earth is full of human beings will its purpose be attained completely. In other words: a person does not fulfill his obligation by establishing his own home; rather, each individual is obligated to lend his hand to establishing many other homes. Thus is the individual obligated regarding the welfare of society.

כבשה refers to *property* (see Commentary, v. 26). Man is commanded to master the earth and subdue it. His task is to acquire the products of the earth and to transform them, so that they become fit for his purposes. Acquisition of property is prerequisite for the tasks of home and society. Property serves as an instrument with which home and society achieve their aims. Thus, the acquisition of property becomes a moral duty.

The mitzvah of **וכבשה**, however, is written here last, which implies a limitation: There is no moral value to property, unless it is devoted to home and society. It is a person's duty to acquire material assets, in order to build a home and to further the society. He should not build a home and support the society in order to increase his assets and his wealth.

The mitzvah of **פרו ורבו** is given at once to both sexes; they are to collaborate in harmony so as to fulfill this mission of man. Nevertheless, before establishing his home, man must first acquire material assets, and this duty — subduing the earth, so as to further man's aims — is primarily incumbent only upon the male (this is alluded to by the **חסר** spelling of the plural **וכבשה**). For this reason the duty of marriage and of establishing a home is assigned directly only to the man, and only to him is it given as an unconditional duty. To the woman it is given as a conditional duty; it applies to her, only when she joins her husband. (See *Yevamos* 65b.)

These commands place the Divine imprint on every aspect of family and communal life. The Torah does not recognize the compartmentalization of life into God-oriented or "religious," on the one hand, and profane, untouched by things Divine, on the other. God claims all of life for His service and for the fulfillment of man's mission as אדם. This applies, first and foremost, to family and communal life.

	The Mission (Free-willed moral development)	How the Mission is Fulfilled (Avodah)	Sphere of Activity (Bracha)	Menorah	Tree	Quality-Characteristic	Self	Where we are Functioning		Levels of Creation
1	וכבשה and exercise control over it	Acquisition and transformation of property	Earth	גביעים כפתורים ופרחים Almond-shaped cups, knobs and flowers	Fruits	Full realization, independent growth	גוף Body	חוץ שבחוץ	הר הבית Temple Mount	עולם העשיה
2	ומלאו את הארץ and fill the earth	Extending blessing to others	Society	קנים Branches	Branches	Motivation and diversification	רגש Emotions	פנים שבחוץ	עזרה Courtyard	עולם היצירה
3	ורבו and multiply	Forming and Educating Children	Home	קנה Shaft	Trunk	Strength and focus	ראש-שכל Head	חוץ שבפנים	היכל Sanctuary	עולם הבריאה
4	פרו Be fruitful	Development of self	Marriage	ירכה Base	Rootstalk	Immutable, enduring, source	נשמה Soul	פנים שבפנים	קדש הקדשים Holy of Holies	עולם האצילות

The Infinite Value of the Individual: Themes of *Sefer Bereshis* Through the Commentary of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch

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Bemidbar 8:1-4 • Translation from Hirsch Chumash, Feldheim-Judaica

- (1) God spoke to Moshe, saying: (א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
- (2) Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you light up the lights, the seven lights shall shine toward the [center of] the Menorah.” (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל־מֹול פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יֵאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת:
- (3) Aharon did so; he lit up its lights toward the [center of] the Menorah, as God had commanded Moshe. (ג) וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל־מֹול פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הַעֲלָה נֵרֹתֶיהָ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:
- (4) And this is the workmanship of the Menorah: hammered out of one piece of gold, to its rootstock, to its blossom, it is of beaten work. Like the vision that God had let Moshe behold, so did he make the Menorah. (ד) זֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמְּנוֹרָה מִקְשָׁה זָהָב עַד־יְרִכָּה עַד־פְּרוֹחָהּ מִקְשָׁה הִוא כַּמִּרְאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כֵּן עָשָׂה אֶת־הַמְּנוֹרָה:

5 God spoke to Moshe, saying:

ה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

6 Take the Levi'im from the midst of the Children of Israel and purify them.

וַקַּח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּים מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְטַהַרְתָּ אֹתָם:

material for everything — material for the rootstock, material for the blossom. מקשה, heavy blows from the God of Israel, formed the raw material into the rootstock and will ultimately produce the final blossom at the top of the tree of light: מקשה זהב עד ירכה עד פרחתה מקשה הוא.

What Moshe wrought with the Sanctuary presents a picture of Israel; for God showed him the tree of life of Israel's whole future: כמראה אשר הראה ה' את משה כן עשה את המנרה. However, הפאמין לא יחיש, "let the believer not expect it soon" (Yeshayahu 28:16).

5-6 We have already noted (above, vv. 2 and 4) the significance of the consecration of the לויים in connection with the preceding חנוכה of the princes and the succeeding continuation of the history of Israel's development. This פרשה was communicated on the day on which the construction of the משכן was completed, the first of Nissan, the eighth day of the מילואים. On that day, the consecration of the כהנים was concluded and the חנוכה of the princes began; and on that day, too, the consecration of the לויים was prescribed (Gittin 60a). On the second of Nissan the פרה אדומה was burned (below, chap. 19), and the consecration of the לויים was carried out on the third day of the month (Sifre on נשא, 7:1).

מחנה לוייה was not banished from טמא מת. וטהרת אתם. The service of the לויים consisted only in being guards outside the Sanctuary and in carrying the parts of the משכן after its dismantling, the לויים would not have required חטאת מי חטאת so as to achieve טהרה from טומאת מת. For the לויים were allowed to approach the sacred objects only after they were covered; and although the idea of the Sanctuary retained its influence even after it was dismantled (see Commentary above, 2:17) — hence even in transit מחנה לוייה and קדושת מחנה ישראל were not nullified — nevertheless, קדושת מחנה שכינה was then in abeyance (see Zevachim 61a ד"ה קדשים). Presumably, their guard duty, too, was held only outside החצר — i.e., in מחנה לוייה. And it appears that, in

Menorah: hammered out of one piece of gold, to its rootstock, to its blossom, it is beaten work. Like the vision that God had let Moshe behold, so did he make the Menorah.

עַד־יִרְכֶה עַד־פְּרַחְתָּהּ מִקֶּשֶׁה הוּא כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כֵּן עָשָׂה מִן־עֲשֵׂה אֶת־הַמְּנֹרֶה: פ

relation to them. But this can hardly be the only reason for the repetition, as it does not explain why Scripture repeats the work of constructing the Menorah and describes the manner in which it was carried out (v. 4); for the whole work of constructing the Menorah was already presented in full detail in Shemos.

Hence, in our view, there is additional significance to this repetition of the task of Aharon and the tribe of Levi. Scripture repeats it at the beginning of the פרשה as preparation for what will follow: the continuation of the history of Israel's development for its great mission. This history shows how vast was the gulf between Israel at its inception and the ideal of its mission; how far the people were from the lofty heights of complete devotion and total commitment to God and His Torah. Nevertheless, a whole tribe in Israel demonstrated its faithfulness to God and His Torah, and for this reason it was to be the servant, representative, and champion of this ideal. To this tribe God entrusted His Urim and Tummim — the ideal of moral integrity and intellectual enlightenment; He could expect that just as in the past שמרו אמתו, so in the future יורו משפטיו ליעקב ותורתו לישראל and ינצרו בריתו (see Devarim 33:8-10 and Commentary there).

Let us now look at the Menorah and consider its construction: מקשה זהב עד ירכה עד פרחתה מקשה הוא. The Menorah is a tree of gold, made of one piece, hammered out by repeated blows of the hammer, from rootstock to blossom. This is the appearance of the bearer of the light sown in the Sanctuary, and thus it rises and blossoms out to God and to His Torah. The spiritual element nurtured in the Sanctuary is pure gold, through and through, requiring no refinement. But its bearer is a tree that grows and develops from the rootstock below to the blossom above. In individuals, also in nations, development to the highest spiritual blossoming requires time. For the individual it takes years, for the nation centuries. The tree is formed of one mass, which already includes the

Preface – Additional reading:

A • “derive the meaning of the words from the lexicon of the Holy Scriptures”:

- ▶ *Commentary on Bereshis* 10:10.
- ▶ *Commentary on Bereshis* 11:7. "What are the elements to the formation of language?"
- ▶ *The Nineteen Letters*, second letter (page 16 in the Feldheim 1995 edition), “Furthermore, we must read the Torah in Hebrew...”

B • “out of the Halachic and Aggadic traditions handed down to us from the early days of our nation along with the Biblical text”

- ▶ *Commentary on Shemos* 21:2 (new edition, page 364), "The relationship between תורה שבכתב and תורה שבעל פה..."

C • “the *Commentary on Bereshis* forms the foundation for the interpretation of the entire Chumash”

- ▶ *Commentary on Bereshis* 1:1 (new edition, page 7) beginning with:

“With this first verse the Torah has already revealed the principal and fundamental truth, the principal and fundamental reality, that totally transforms our view of the world and of ourselves. This single verse would have sufficed to teach us to view the world as God's world and ourselves as God's creatures, and to recognize the world and ourselves — created by God — as God's own sacred possessions. This single verse would have sufficed to teach us our duty: to do God's Will in God's world with all our energies — which also belong to Him. ...”

Bearers of Light – Additional reading:

A • Commentary on Bereshis 2:1, “ויכלו השמים והארץ”

- ▶ “...The *ending* of creation, the *cessation of formation* of new relations — in a word: the present Sabbath of creation — is a greater revelation of the Creator than the very existence of heaven and earth ... a moral work of a Creator endowed with supreme wisdom, free will and unlimited power.”

B • Commentary on Bereshis 1:31

- ▶ “וירא אלקים וגו’...הנה...כל...ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הששי” , good beyond all expectations

Creation of אדם – Additional reading:

A • *Commentary on Bereshis 1:26, “וירדו”*

- ▶ on the difference between humanity’s רדה conditional, partial control over living creatures and כבש total, transformational use of the inanimate world

B • *Commentary on Shemos 20:19-21, “מזבח אדמה”*

C • *The Hirsch Haggadah, pg 50, commentary on “Baruch”:*
“But what leads the Jew to God...”

D • *Commentary on Shemos 20:19-21 “מזבח אדמה תעשה לי”*

Development Over Time – Additional reading:

- A • *The Collected Writings, Volume III,*
pg 182, on יָד (tree, wood)

- B • *Commentary on Shemos 25:39, “The Menorah”,*
on the Menorah as a golden tree