

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshiyot Tazria-Metzora

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Man's Search for Meaning, Part 2

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

Marking Yom ha'Atzmaut, we asked Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, former Rabbi of Kehillat Shaarei Torah of Toronto, to write a column on his family's aliya.

I want to share some thoughts about our aliya.

We made aliya 7 years ago. I had been in the rabbinate for 23 years. We chose to make the move, following our children, all of whom were in Israel at that time.

Much of what we expected has been realized. And much was unexpected. However, I don't think our experience is any different from that of any other immigrant to a new land. Canada is a land full of immigrants. The Jewish community of Toronto is a community made up of perhaps a majority of people whose families were not born and raised in Toronto.

The challenges of moving to a new place are no different when moving to Israel as when moving to any other foreign land. There is unfamiliarity. Need to re-establish a social group. New jobs. New language. Different bureaucracy. It is those things that cause aggravation to *olim*. Understandably. However, there is a uniqueness to the aliya experience which is not shared with other immigrant experiences. We live our lives on two planes. The ordinary. And the transcendent.

The ordinary is all that I have described above. Daily routine of schools, shopping, working, language, news, buses, and all the rest that occupies our time.

The transcendent is our sense of

satisfaction in life: the feeling that our lives are valuable, worthwhile, meaningful, fulfilled. It is the experience occasionally of a soaring soul, moments of elevation, of *dveikus*, feeling close to or closer to the Divine. It is feelings of elation, of satisfaction. Of being centre stage, not stage right: the actor, not the audience. The sense that life's opportunity has been seized, not ignored. So while the ordinary is disrupted, jarred, by aliya, the transcendent is animated, alive and richly nourished.

I would frame this in the context of the epochs in Tanach of entry into Eretz Yisrael: Avraham, Yehoshua and Ezra.

Avraham entered the land quietly. There was no Jewish people, just a Jewish person. He was on a spiritual journey. It was there that he experienced a vision of the Divine. He left behind a world whose values and belief did not fit anymore.

For me, spiritual murmurings are a big part of living in Israel – perhaps the biggest part. It is the pursuit of a higher meaning, of a closer reach for the Divine, of a desire for *dveikus*. And there are moments of elevation, of soaring. To be sure those moments are attainable anywhere in the world. But for me, those moments are richer, fuller, more regular here in Yerushalayim.

Yehoshua entered the land with miracles. He led the entire Jewish people. It was the promise to Avraham fulfilled. It was the Divine Hand leading the people into the Land to make good on the promise.

Modern day Israel feels to me miraculous. To me it looks like the

Divine Hand leading us back to our land. I find myself incredulous frequently – the wows of what we have done in building this place. The military victories. Building economically, with creativity, amidst all the challenges. I can't but think that we have an Angel investor backing us – I mean, a real Angel investor.

Ezra left Persia to go home. The Jews left the rivers of Babylon to return home. They made the decision to be centre stage and not watching from a distance. This is the epoch of Jewish people, the epoch of belonging.

Living in Israel is taking our place centre stage. In Toronto, the first thing I would read in the papers was the news about Israel. To live here is to trade reading about it for living it. There is a very deep feeling of satisfaction to be in the middle of Jewish history. We have but one Jewish state, where Pesach is a national holiday and "Have a good weekend" is Shabbat Shalom.

Life for us in Israel is dramatically different from in Toronto on many levels. In the dual plane of existence, of the ordinary and the transcendent, the ordinary is disrupted, at times frustrating, unfamiliar and disappointing. However, the transcendent part of life dominates the ordinary, overtakes it, overwhelms it. The transcendent makes the irritations of the ordinary trite and insignificant.

For me, living in Yerushalayim is living a life of reaching for the transcendent. It is taking centre stage. It is a life of soulful satisfaction, of a nourished neshama.

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Halakhic Morality: Essays on Ethics and Masorah

By Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik; Editors Joel Wolowelsky, Reuven Ziegler
Toras HoRav Foundation, Maggid Books
2017

The Author

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1903-1993) needs no introduction for readers of Toronto Torah. He was the veritable leader of the American modern Orthodox community for decades, and his teaching and insights continue to inspire his numerous students, as well as their students and communities. Due to his influence, many have devoted their time to publish a large number of his lectures and manuscripts posthumously. This work is such a collection, produced by Maggid books and the Toras HoRav Foundation.

Content of the Book

The book collects source material from various contexts, such as notes from the classes that Rabbi Soloveitchik gave at Bernard Revel Graduate school, memorial lectures, and personal manuscripts. All the pieces attempt to clarify the less quantifiable parts of Torah and the Halakhic system – specifically the nature of our tradition,

the Masorah, and the ethos and morality of the Torah.

The book is divided into two parts. The former half provides a conceptual introduction to Pirkei Avot, as well as an analysis of the first few mishnayot. In these essays, Rabbi Soloveitchik propounds several theories about the Jewish tradition, among these: that there is the tradition of theoretical learning, the “halakhic Masorah”, as well as the tradition of ethical living, the “intimate-personal tradition”; that the tradition is meta-historical, one that allows its members to communicate across generations; that the tradition (usually) encourages an “exoteric educational philosophy” that spreads Torah even to the unworthy.

The second half of the book contains several essays, each devoted to a different topic. One article focuses on essence of tzedakah, charity, and its unique place in Jewish tradition. Two pieces consider the place of subjective religious expression, and another the importance of humility. Drawing on both traditional and secular sources, Rabbi Soloveitchik develops these themes with sophistication.

Religious Styles

To focus on one lesson: Rabbi Soloveitchik notes that in addition to the universal way to live a Torah life, what he calls the proper *derekh ha-hayyim*, it is critical to understand that each person must follow his own path – what he calls *signon ha-hayyim*, the Torah “style of living.” To illustrate the power that these individualized styles can have, he describes the biographies and personalities of the four Rabbis of Brisk between the years 1840 and 1918 – Rabbi Yaakov Meir Padua, Rabbi Hirsch Orenstein, Rabbi Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik (Rabbi Soloveitchik’s great-grandfather and namesake), and Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik (Rabbi Soloveitchik’s grandfather). The first was the ascetic, the Hasid; the second was rich and friendly; the third was a “spiritual aristocrat”; the fourth, “a democrat from head to toe, a real plebian.” Rabbi Soloveitchik celebrates that fact that they “all had the same way of life, but their styles of living were different.” The message: “Any style is welcome – but a person must have a style.”

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Rabbi Chaim Druckman

Born: 1930, Poland

Chief Rabbi of Merkaz Shapira (1963-present)

Life

Chaim Druckman was born in 1932, in Kutu, Poland (today Ukraine). After many miracles during the Holocaust, young Chaim was able to reach Eretz Yisrael, alone, in 1944. After the war ended, his parents joined him. He served in the IDF from 1949 to 1952, and then began studying at Yeshivat Merkaz Harav in Jerusalem, where he met the man who would become his most prominent teacher, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Following a brief *shelichut* in the US for Bnei Akiva, Rabbi Druckman returned to the yeshiva as a teacher of *Emunah* (Jewish thought).

Rabbi Druckman established some of the leading Religious Zionist education institutions in Israel: In 1964, he founded the Ohr Etzion B’nei Akiva Yeshiva High school, where he remains Rosh Yeshiva to this day. In 1977, he established the Ohr Etzion Yeshiva, which for many years was the largest Hesder Yeshiva in the country, and in 1995 he founded the Ohr MeOfir academy for high school graduates of the Ethiopian community. Since 1996, he has also been the head of the Center for Bnei Akiva Yeshivot and Ulpanot in Israel.

Rabbi Druckman has also held leading roles in the Religious-Zionist party (Mafdal), and he was appointed as a member of the Knesset from 1977 to 2003. Through his political career his fierce belief in the necessity of Jewish settling in all parts of Israel was reflected clearly, as was his fierce opposition to any agreement which would cede territories.

In the last twenty years, Rabbi Druckman has been a leading figure in a controversial attempt to ‘streamline’ conversion of non-Jews living in Israel. He sees this mission preventing a massive problem of intermarriage, following the arrival of hundreds of thousands of non-Jews from Russia in the 1990’s. Rabbi Druckman signed 50,000 conversion certificates as the head of the State Conversion Authority.

In 2012, Rabbi Druckman was awarded the Israel Prize for his contributions to society and education.

Legacy

Rabbi Druckman’s legacy is focused in two principal areas:

Education – Rabbi Druckman has devoted much of his life to establishing and maintaining Religious Zionist educational institutions. These institutions vary in the age and population they address, but all of them are based upon principles of inclusion of all Jews and on a strong belief in the importance of a systematic and thorough teaching of our faith.

Zionism – As noted above, Rabbi Druckman pushes for the realization of the Zionist dream. Apart from his political career already described, Rabbi Druckman has also written several books in which he expounds on his understanding of the Jewish state as the beginning of our redemption.

Well over eighty now, Rabbi Druckman recently said, “My educational activity is the center of my life; anything else I see as reserve service. I will continue educating as long as I can, and may G-d give me the strength to do so.”

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Biography The Netziv

Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, also known as the Netziv (1816-1893), was born in Mir, Russia, to a family of Torah scholars. At the age of 13 he married Rayna Batya, daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin, the Rosh Yeshiva of the famed Volozhin yeshiva in Belarus and son of the yeshiva's founder, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin.

After decades of dedicated study, Rabbi Berlin became the Rosh Yeshiva of the Volozhin yeshiva. Despite many difficulties, including the burning down of Volozhin and its yeshiva on two occasions, enrollment steadily increased under Rabbi Berlin's guidance. During his tenure, the yeshiva produced many future leaders, such as Rabbi Moshe Epstein, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, and Rabbi Shimon Shkop.

Rabbi Berlin's approach to learning was to search for the earliest possible sources on a topic, thereby developing a clear understanding through the roots of our tradition. For similar reasons, he was also a strong proponent of the study of Tanach. Additionally, Rabbi Berlin was an early supporter of the Chovevei Tzion movement and he strongly supported the resettling of Eretz Yisrael.

The *maskilim*, who viewed the Volozhin yeshiva's success as their failure, constantly appealed to the Russian government to disrupt the yeshiva's program. Eventually, their demands for an overwhelming program of secular studies (to take place from the morning until 3:00 PM), the requirement that every instructor hold a secular degree in education, as well as the closing of the yeshiva at night, forced Rabbi Berlin's hand; after leading the yeshiva for forty years, he decided to close it. (It should be noted that Rabbi Berlin had previously, albeit begrudgingly, allowed limited instruction in Russian to the Yeshiva. It was the extent of the demands that made the final version unbearable. See <http://bit.ly/2gsJvxx> for Rabbi J. J. Schacter's full presentation of this incident.)

Rabbi Berlin's life was so intertwined with the yeshiva's existence that its closing had detrimental effects on his health, eventually leading to his passing only two years later.

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Torah and Translation *Acharit kiBereishit—The End Like the Beginning* Netziv, Letter published in Shivat Tzion 1

Translated by Adam Friedmann

...בשעה שאין קללת ד' רבוצה על ארצנו להיות שממה אז רצונו ית' שתתישב הארץ על ידי ישראל עמו, וכמו שאמר ד' לצחק אבינו "שכן בארץ" ופירשו חז"ל במ"ר "עשה שכונה בארץ, הוא זורע הוא נוטע הוא נציב", אע"ג שהפולשתים הושיבוהו אז לפי צרכם ועדין לא הגיעה השעה שינחלוהו זרע אברהם, מכל מקום היה רצון ד' שיעשה צחק מצדו איזה מושב ושכונה לפניו.

והנה בעת החיה קול דודנו הקב"ה עלינו ע"י שאנו רואים כמה סבות היוצאות מהמסבב ית' כי כך ברצונו ית' שתתישב הארץ לאט לאט ע"י נחיי ישראל...

ועלינו להעיר ולהפיה רוח אהבת הארץ ולמלא אחר רצון ד' בכל אופן שיזדמן לפנינו, אם בפעולה חומרית, בעבודת האדמה או בחרשת המעשה או במסחר, אם בפעולה רוחנית היינו הדפסת ספרים מועילים לענין הנשגב.

ואין לנו לחשוב מחשבות כי ראוי היה הדבר הגדול הזה באופנים אחרים כאשר מצויר דעות בני האדם, כי על זה לקה משה רבינו על שאמר "והן לא יאמינו לי ולא ישמעו בקלי כי יאמרו לא נראה לך ד'..." אמר משה שלא יאמינו למשה כי נראה אליו ד' והיינו משום שלא היו יודעים את משה לגדול בתורה המסורה להם מן האבות וגם לא נודע בקדושה וחסידות... ולפי דעות בני האדם היה ראוי יותר שיראה ד' לאהרן קדוש ד' שהיה נביא עוד במצרים...וכן לעת כזאת...אין לנו להתחכם לאמר כי נצרך להיות באופן אחר.

...At a time when the curses of G-d do not extend over our land to make it desolate then it is G-d's will that the land be settled by His nation Israel. This is as G-d told our forefather Yitzchak, "Live in the land," and the Sages explained this in Midrash Rabbah, "Make a dwelling area in the land, sow seeds, plant, and stand firm." Although the Philistines were at that time settled in it according to their needs and the time had not yet arrived for the descendants of Avraham to inherit it, nevertheless it was the will of G-d that Yitzchak, for his part, should make some settlement and dwelling area before Him.

Behold, in these days the voice of our beloved, the Holy One blessed be He, is upon us because we see many effects emerging from the primal Cause, may He be blessed, that it is His will that the land be settled gradually by the dispersed of Israel...

It is incumbent upon us to arouse ourselves and to breathe a breath of love for the land and to fulfill G-d's will in any manner open to us. Whether through physical activity, through working the land or through skilled craft or business, or whether through spiritual means – that is to say through the publishing of books which aid this lofty cause.

And we should not think that it would have been more fitting for this great thing to have occurred in a different way as is pictured in the minds of men, because this was the cause of Moshe's punishment, since he said, "They will not believe in me and will not listen to my voice because they will say, G-d has not appeared to you."... Moshe meant that they would not believe that G-d appeared to him because they did not know Moshe to have been raised with the Torah that was transmitted to them from the ancestors, and he was also not known for holiness and piety... According to the opinions of man it would have been more fitting for G-d to have appeared to Aharon, who was holy to G-d and who was a prophet already in Egypt....So too in our times...we should not delude ourselves and say that this should occur in a different way.

As we have already discussed (see mitzvot 583 and 585), the Torah strikes a balance between the needs of borrowers and the rights of lenders in an attempt to ensure that credit will be available for those in need. This is particularly expressed in the laws of handling collateral taken from a borrower.

Shemot 22:25 instructs, “If you take another person’s clothing as collateral, you shall return it before sunrise.” Devarim 24:12-13 amplifies, “And if he is a pauper, you shall not lie down with his collateral. You shall surely return the collateral to him when the sun sets, and he will lie down in his garment and bless you, etc.” Sefer haChinuch lists two mitzvot here: 1) Do not withhold collateral when its

owner needs it (Mitzvah 586) and 2) Actively return collateral to its owner when he needs it (Mitzvah 587).

These two mitzvot clearly protect the borrower, but Sefer haChinuch (587) sees here an added benefit for the lender: training in kindness toward those who are at his mercy. Similarly, Sefer haChinuch (216) contends that the mitzvah of leaving the corner of one’s field for needy people is meant to instill generosity and the power of self-restraint in the owner of the field. Through these mitzvot, the giver also receives.

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Weekly Highlights: Apr. 29 – May 5 / 3 Iyar – 9 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Apr. 28-29				
After hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
Before Pirkei Avot	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara: Idols for sale!	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Apr. 30				
8:45 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Not this week
9:15 AM	R’ Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel II	Associated North	Rm. 206; Hebrew
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Mrs. Tanya HaLevi Yaron Perez	Remembering / Not Forgetting “His Kindness is Forever”	Midreshet Yom Rishon Shaarei Shomayim	For women Light Refreshments
Mon. May 1				
7:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Jewish Philosophy	Terraces of Baycrest	Not this week
8:30 PM	Adam Friedmann	Gemara Arvei Pesachim	Clanton Park	Not this week
6:45 PM	Community Commemoration of Yom haZikaron and Yom ha’Atzmaut At Shaarei Shomayim, 470 Glencairn Ave. Toronto			
Tue. May 2				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Ezra: Ezra’s Powers	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. May 3				
10:00 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Jewish Love, Week 1: Dating	Beth Emeth	There is a fee; info@torontotorah.com
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Vayikra	carolleser@rogers.com	
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:30 PM	Yaron Perez	Parshah: הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	
Thu. May 4				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Yiftach’s Daughter	49 Michael Ct.	Women
Fri. May 5				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Borrowing a Cup of Sugar	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
<p>This week, our Men’s Beit Midrash for University Students at Yeshivat Or Chaim offers: Sunday 10:00 AM Gemara Chullin, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg Sunday 11:00 AM Kuzari, Rabbi Elan Mazer Tuesday 8:30 AM, Nefesh haChaim, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring Friday 8:30 AM, Yeshayah, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner</p>				
<p>This week, our Women’s Beit Midrash for University Students at Ulpanat Orot offers: Monday, 9:30 AM to Noon, Middot HaNefesh through Chassidut, Mrs. Elliezra Perez</p>				