

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Acharei Mot

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Exchanging Nefashot

Rabbi David Ely Grundland

One of the most cryptic concepts in Torah is that of *korbanot*. While much of Sefer Vayikra is dedicated to delineating the laws and principles of when and how they are offered, why and how they work is left a mystery. Parshat Acharei Mot does seem to offer an answer to the question - but the answer is just as cryptic as the question.

In the middle of the parshah, wedged between the Avodah of Yom Kippur and the laws of forbidden relationships, the Torah records the prohibition against eating blood, or non-slaughtered flesh. Vayikra 17:11 explains, "For the *nefesh* (soul) of the flesh is in the blood, and I have therefore given it to you [to be placed] upon the altar, to atone for your *nefeshot*. For the blood will atone via the *nefesh*." While the verse raises many questions, we will focus on two: what is a *nefesh*, and what about the blood-*nefesh* relationship brings about atonement?

Nefesh: Life or Consciousness?

Rashi (ibid.) answers simply: *Nefesh* is life. Every living creature survives because of its blood, and Hashem has established that the blood/lifeforce of one creature can atone for the life of a human. There is a one-for-one trade-off where one owes their life to Hashem for a transgression, and Hashem, in His kindness, accepts the life of another creature instead. Rashi does not explain why such an exchange should work.

Ramban (ibid.) gives a fuller explanation. He explains that initially humans were supposed to be

vegetarian, but following the Flood, when Noah helped save the animals and then brought offerings, Hashem permitted humanity to use animals as tools of atonement through slaughter and sacrifice. (See Bereishit 1:29, 9:3.) However, according to Ramban, ideally animals were still not supposed to be food, as they too possess *nefeshot*, and it is inappropriate that one *nefesh* eat another.

Ramban's proof for the presence of a *nefesh* in animals is striking, as he explains that the *nefesh* is apparent in the animals' behaviour and display of conscious awareness. Animals run from danger, run to pleasure, and become accustomed to social structures. The animal is conscious of the world, and therefore it must have a *nefesh*. While *nefesh* is normally translated as soul, it seems more appropriate to define it as consciousness, and a creature's awareness of the world imbues its life (and blood) with such significance.

Along the same lines of defining *nefesh* as consciousness, Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:46) explains that ancient pagans ate flesh and blood in order to integrate into themselves the mind of the deceased, and gain both physical strength and awareness of future events. These benefits were incorrectly believed to be gained because of the *nefesh* in the blood. The Torah forbade this misunderstanding and misuse of blood, instead commanding that it (and all it represents) be used for holy purposes.

Achieving Atonement

Reflecting back to the original questions, why can atonement be

achieved by sacrificing the representative of an animal's consciousness on behalf of a person?

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Likkutei Amarim Tanya 1-2) contends that every Jew actually has two *nefashot* - a *nefesh behemit* (animal soul) and a *nefesh Elokit* - a G-dly soul. He explains that the *nefesh Elokit* is untouchable and perfect. He argues that it is the *nefesh behemit* that is "in the blood." It is the source of our negative character traits, such as anger, pride, lust, laziness, vanity and pursuit of physical pleasure. It is the task of every individual to try to overcome the *nefesh behemit* and to connect to the *nefesh Elokit*. (This is accomplished through the medium of mitzvot and positive character traits, among other things.)

Perhaps Tanya's insight can give some further understanding into the "exchange of *nefashot*". Perhaps, the action of sacrificing an animal as a *korban* serves as a reminder that in sinning, a person was connected wholly with the consciousness of their animal soul and disconnected from Holiness. By sacrificing an animal's consciousness, one is, through the animal's blood, sacrificing that part of one's own consciousness that allowed for sin to take place, and striving to connect more deeply with one's connection to the Divine. The blood of the animal soul is offered on the altar and elevated to be closer to G-dliness.

May we be blessed to constantly elevate our consciousness and bond with the Divine Will.

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Rabbi Yoel Bin Nun
***Nes Kibbutz Galuyot* (The Miracle of the Gathering of the Exiles)**
Yediot Acharonot, 2011, Hebrew

Who is the author?

"I am a believing Zionist in my perspective; an Israeli Jew in my identity." With these opening words, Rabbi Bin Nun (b. 1946) tries to define his essence, but his rich biography attests to a more complicated personality. He was a student of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook; one of the paratroopers who liberated Jerusalem; an ally of the late political activist Hanan Porat; a founder of the settlement movement; and one of the founders of Yeshivat Har Etzion. He is a revered teacher of Tanach, has been one of the leading figures in the effort to advance Tanach study. He founded Gush Emunim, a right-wing political entity, in his home in 1974, yet he has repeatedly called for moderation and reconciliation between the religious and secular communities.

In almost everything in which he has been involved, Rabbi Bin Nun has become a leader and an innovator. His books are always a source for inspiration, regardless of how much the

reader agrees with all of their content.

What is the purpose of the book?

As explained in the introduction, the author wanted to begin paving the way toward a 'Haggadah' for Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day), to be studied and discussed during the festive meal. As such, it includes long paragraphs from different sources to be recited.

While the attempt is interesting, it seems to this writer to be premature. For this writer, the real importance of the book lies with Rabbi Bin Nun's own articles, scattered through the book. Each one is a gem in which the author shares his approach to the modern state of Israel in general, and to Yom ha'Atzmaut in particular.

What are the main themes presented in the book?

As its name suggests, the book emphasizes the gathering of the exiles as the central miracle for which we are to thank G-d on Yom Ha'Atzmaut, and beyond that, as the main achievement of the Jewish state. The other benefits of Israel could have been attained elsewhere: America could serve, at least in certain periods, as a safe

harbor for Jews escaping antisemitism; Russia has served, at certain times, as an incubator for Jewish culture; Spain has served as fertile ground for Jewish Philosophy to develop. However, nowhere on earth, apart from Israel, could all the Jews gather back into a nation, bringing with them the special gifts and skills they gained during the long years of exile.

Rabbi Bin Nun – a great believer in the importance of this reunion – analyzes throughout his book not only biblical and talmudic texts, but also the writings of secular Jews such as Bialik and Berner, suggesting interpretations of the Declaration of Independence and familiarizing us with the ancient texts and traditions of Ethiopian Jews. Thus, while the division between the holy and secular is maintained, the author lets us glimpse, if even for a short while, how everything fits into a giant puzzle: one seen clearly only to the One who sits above, planning for two thousand years, so that our nation could return to its land ready for the great mission of establishing a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

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613 Mitzvot: 507: Terumah

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

After denying the tribe of Levi ownership of tribal land and shares of the spoils of war, Devarim 18:3-5 assigns certain gifts to the kohanim. In Toronto Torah 7:31 we discussed the first gift listed – the *zroa*, *lechayayim* and *keivah*, which are parts of slaughtered oxen, sheep and goats. The second gift listed is, "The first of your grain, wine and olive oil," and Sefer haChinuch lists this as the Torah's 507th mitzvah. This gift of Israeli produce is called *terumah*, although this word is also used in the Torah to refer to other gifts and donations given to the kohanim, leviyim, and Beit haMikdash.

The Gift

Although the biblical text explicitly applies *terumah* only to grain, wine and oil, we also give *terumah* from tree fruit and vegetables for kohanim. Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Terumot 2:1) contends that these latter gifts are also biblically required; Raavad (Hilchot Terumot 1:5), Rashi (Berachot 36a *gabei maaser*) and others view them as rabbinic.

Unlike with the ten percent tithed for *maaser*, the Torah does not specify a percentage to give for *terumah*, and one fulfills the biblical obligation by separating any quantity. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Terumot 3:1) However, a mishnah (Terumot 4:3) informs us that average *terumah* is 2%, while a stingy person gives 1/60, and a more generous person gives 1/40. These fractions are linked with biblical verses (Tosefta Terumot 5:8 and Yerushalmi Terumot 4:3), but are actually rabbinic standards.

Until *terumah* and the other gifts are identified, produce is

identified as *tevel*, and one may not eat it. (Sefer haChinuch 284) A farmer is instructed to identify the *terumah* gift before any other, but gifts set aside in any order are valid. (ibid. 72)

The Recipient

Only a kohen may eat *terumah* (ibid. 280); a kohen's employee may not eat *terumah* (ibid. 281), and an uncircumcised male kohen may not eat *terumah* (ibid. 282). Some suggest that a kohen may eat *terumah* if there is a medical reason for him to avoid circumcision. (Tosafot Zevachim 22b *arel*, Minchat Chinuch 282:9) Women who are from a family of kehunah, but who wed someone who is not halachically eligible to marry them, are disqualified from eating *terumah*. (Sefer haChinuch 283)

Terumah Outside Israel

The Torah (Bamidbar 15:19-20) instructs us to separate a *challah* gift from dough in Israel. The Sages created a rabbinic obligation to separate *challah* outside of Israel as well, lest we forget this mitzvah. (Mishnah Challah 4:8; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Bikkurim 5:7-9) However, there is no similar decree regarding *terumah* from produce outside of Israel. Some suggest that this is because dough is universal, while growing produce is limited to land-owners. Other suggest that the discrepancy is because dough from outside of Israel is obligated in *challah* if brought to Israel, but produce from outside of Israel will never become obligated in *terumah*. (See Tosafot Kiddushin 36b *kol*, and Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Bikkurim 5:6.)

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Biography

Rabbi Avraham Y. Kook

Rabbi Netanel Javasky

[The following is excerpted from a longer biography by Rabbi Netanel Javasky.]

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was born in Latvia in 1865. Recognized as a prodigy at a young age, he joined the famed Volozhin Yeshiva, and developed a fond relationship with the Rosh haYeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv). His stay in Volozhin was under two years, but the Netziv is quoted as saying that had the entire Volozhin Yeshiva been founded just to teach Rav Kook, it would have been a worthwhile endeavour. His brilliance and inquisitive nature combined to lead him to the study of subjects not commonly explored in the traditional Yeshiva settings of the time, including Tanach, philosophy, Hebrew language and mysticism. Becoming a Rabbi at the age of 23, Rav Kook, in his early years, served the communities of Zamel and then Bausk.

In the early years of the 20th century, immediately before emigrating to Israel, Rav Kook published three articles on the topic of Israel; the ideas in these articles would form a basis for his philosophy on this subject. In 1904 Rav Kook became Rabbi of Jaffa, and his broad impact was instantly felt. He had great respect and love for all Jews, and considered them all as pioneers in the spiritual redemption. Rav Kook explained that the Jew was made up of two components: the inner *pintele yid* and the route which he has set out upon with his actions. Even if one was weak in the latter, there was still the heart and soul of a Jew that could be loved and encouraged. Rav Kook's love and affection towards the secularists was often seen by his opponents as compromising Halachah, supporting those who were anti-religion.

Rav Kook was in Europe during the outbreak of World War I, and he used the opportunity to spread his desire that religious Jews settle the Land and influence its development. Soon after his return home, he was appointed as the first Chief Rabbi.

Rav Kook wrote prolifically on Jewish thought and the development of the Jewish land; new works of his writings continue to be published today. In 1924 he founded Yeshivat Merkaz haRav - named posthumously in his honour - known today as the bastion of Religious Zionism and as a place which has become synonymous with the teachings of Rav Kook. Rav Kook passed away in 1935, but his influence continues to be felt to this very day.

Torah and Translation

Our True Relationship with the Land

Rabbi Avraham Y. Kook, Orot Eretz Yisrael 1-2

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

ארץ ישראל איננה דבר חיצוני, קנין חיצוני לאומה, רק בתור אמצעי למטרה של ההתאגדות הכללית והחזקת קיומה החמרי או אפילו הרוחני. ארץ ישראל היא חטיבה עצמית קשורה בקשר חיים עם האומה, חבוקה בסגולות פנימיות עם מציאותה.

ומתוך כך אי אפשר לעמוד על התוכן של סגולת קדושת ארץ ישראל, ולהוציא לפועל את עומק חבתה, בשום השכלה רציונלית אנושית כי אם ברוח ד' אשר על האומה בכללה, בהטבעה הטבעית הרוחנית אשר בנשמת ישראל, שהיא ששולחת את קויה בצבעים טבעיים בכל הארחות של ההרגשה הבריאה, ומזרחת היא את זריחתה העליונה על פי אותה המדה של רוח הקדושה העליונה הממלאת חיים ונעם עליון את לבב קדושי הרעיון ועמוקי המחשבה הישראלית.

המחשבה על דבר ארץ ישראל שהיא רק ערך חיצוני כדי העמדת אגודת האומה, אפילו כשהיא באה כדי לבצר על ידה את הרעיון היהודי בגולה, כדי לשמור את צביונו ולאמץ את האמונה והיראה והחזק של המצות המעשיות בצורה הגונה, אין לה הפרי הראוי לקיום, כי היסוד הזה הוא רעוע בערך איתן הקודש של ארץ ישראל. האמוץ האמיתי של רעיון היהדות בגולה בא יבא רק מצד עמק שקועו בארץ ישראל, ומתקות ארץ ישראל יקבל תמיד את כל תכונותיו העצמיות.

צפית ישועה היא כח המעמיד של היהדות הגלונית, והיהדות של ארץ ישראל היא הישועה עצמה...

לא שוללים אנחנו כל מין ציור והבנה המיוסד על ישרות ורגשי דעה ויראת שמים באיזו צורה שהיא, רק את אותו הצד ששיטה כזאת תחפץ לשלול את הרזים ואת השפעתם הגדולה על רוח האומה, כי זהו אסון שאנו חייבים ללחום אותו, בעצה ובתבונה, בקדושה ובגבורה.

The Land of Israel is not an external thing, an external national property, a mere means toward the end of national unification and reinforcement of the nation's physical or even spiritual survival. The Land of Israel is an independent entity, bound to the nation in the bond of life, embraced due to internal inherent qualities.

Therefore, it is not possible to identify the nature of the special holiness of the Land of Israel, and to actualize this deep love for her, via any human, rational insight. [It is possible] only through the Divine spirit which rests upon the nation as a whole, a natural spiritual imprint within the Israelite soul, sending forth its radiance in natural colours through all of the paths of healthy sensation, and shining its higher illumination according to that higher sacred spirit which fills with life and higher beauty the hearts of those of holy conception and deep Israelite thought.

Contemplating the Land of Israel as an external value which serves only the purpose of uniting the nation, even for the sake of enabling the Jewish idea in exile, guarding its form, strengthening faith and reverence and strengthening practical mitzvot in their proper form, does not produce durable fruit. This foundation is rotten, compared to the sacred strength of the Land of Israel. True strengthening of the Jewish idea in exile will only come via deep embedding in the Land of Israel; via yearning for the Land of Israel, [the Jewish idea] will continually receive all of its independent traits.

Anticipating of redemption is the force which maintains Jewry in exile, and the Judaism of the Land of Israel is the redemption itself...

We do not reject any conception or understanding [of our relationship with the Land of Israel] which is founded upon righteousness and intellectual sensitivity and awe of heaven, in any form, but only that aspect which wishes to deny the secrets and their great influence upon the national spirit. This is a disaster against which we must battle, with counsel and understanding, with sanctity and with might.

This Week in Israeli History: 2 Iyar 5710 (Apr. 19 1950)

Operation Ezra and Nechemiah

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

2 Iyar is Tuesday

On 2 Iyar 5710, Israel began Operation Ezra and Nechemiah to bring between 120,000 and 130,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel via Iran and Cyprus. The Jewish community had lived in Iraq for over 2,500 years with relative stability and prosperity.

Starting with the 1940 *Farhud*, a two-day riot which left 180 Jews dead, the safety of the Jews began to be called into question. In the lead up, and even more so with the actual founding of the state in 1948, the violence against the Jews intensified, and many Jews began to feel their lives were in danger and desired to flee. Events such as the execution of the successful businessman Shafiq Ades on dubious charges of selling weapons to Israel and the Iraqi Community Party increased those fears. However, the

government of Iraq prevented Jews from moving to Israel as they did not want to strengthen the fledgling state.

In 1950, after being pressured by the American, British, and Israeli governments, the government of Iraq allowed the Jews one year to freely leave and give up citizenship. While at first the process was sluggish due to various causes, in March 1951 the Israeli government organized, along with the Near East Transport Company and El Al, an airlift of 90,000 Jews in a process which finished in early 1952, leaving only about 6,000 Jews in Iraq.

In recent years, Diarna (www.diarna.org) has attempted to gather stories and pictures to commemorate many of the communities in Arab lands before their memories are lost.

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Weekly Highlights: May 7 — May 13 / 29 Nisan - 5 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת May 6-7				
After Hashkamah	R' David Ely Grundland	Being Kohen Gadol	Shaarei Shomayim	
After Hashkamah	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Midrash Rabbah	Clanton Park	Not this week
4:00 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Parent-Child Learning: Pirkei Avot	Shaarei Shomayim	New!
Before Pirkei Avot	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Church Hand-me-downs	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. May 8				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Not this week
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	The Book of Shemuel	Associated (North)	Hebrew
Mon. May 9				
9:30 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women's Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	University Students
7:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi Highlights Medical Halachah	Shaarei Shomayim	Beit Midrash Night
Tue. May 10				
9:30 AM	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Chabura: דבר חריף	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University Chaverim
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Iyov: G-d Speaks	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. May 11				
	Yom haZikaron			
12:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Ethics from the Bookshelf: The Necklace	Zeifmans LLP 201 Bridgeland Ave	Lunch served; RSVP to rk@zeifmans.ca
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of the Exodus	Location: Contact carollesser@rogers.com	For women
6:45 PM	Community Yom haZikaron Commemoration / Yom ha'Atzmaut Celebration At BAYT			
Thu. May 12				
	Yom ha'Atzmaut			
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: The Cycle Begins	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. May 13				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced