



Acharei Mot

Living After Life

Where does the Torah tell us that there is an afterlife?

There are actually quite a number of references to this, and one of them is in Parshat Acharei Mot.

Here, the Torah tells us: *Asher ya'aseh otam ha'adam vachai bahem*—we should perform the Mitzvot of Hashem so that we live through them.

There are different *Perushim* (commentaries) on this term *vachai bahem*. What does it really mean?

The Talmud, in Masechet Yoma (Daf peh heh, amud aleph), brings the view of our sages which states: *Asher ya'aseh otam ha'adam vachai bahem, velo yamut bahem*—the Mitzvot are here to live through them, and not to die through them, God forbid.

The performance of Mitzvot should not force you to forfeit your life. This applies to all situations—except for just three: the three cardinal sins, which are murder, idolatry, and adultery.

That is why *Pikuach Nefesh*—the saving of life—transcends all. For example, if on Shabbat, one needs to go to hospital or take somebody to hospital in order to save a life, of course you must break Shabbat for that purpose. And so too on Yom Kippur: if a doctor orders one to eat in order to preserve life – of course you must break your fast.

There is also a fascinating *perush*—a commentary—of the Chiddushei Harim. He says *vachai bahem*, “live through them,” means: get a life through them.

Through the performance of Mitzvot, our lives are enhanced. We have added meaning and joy in our existence here on Earth.

The third *perush* I want to bring to your attention is that of Targum Onkelos—the Aramaic translation of the Torah.

The Targum tells us: *vachai bahem* means that you should live through them both in this world and in the world to come.

As a result of leading an upright life filled with Mitzvot, we pave the way towards continued existence. When, sadly, a person passes away, it's only the physical form that is ended. The *neshama*—the soul—continues to live on.

So therefore, from the Torah we learn that by performing the Mitzvot, by being outstanding human beings, we are guaranteed a life of meaning and of joy—an enhanced existence in this world. But even more than that, we are guaranteed the ongoing life of the soul.

Shabbat Shalom.