

PARSHAT TERUMAH  
EXODUS 25:1-27:19  
HAFTARAH II KINGS 12:1-17  
29 SHEVAT 5785/27 FEBRUARY 2025



No. 22 (untitled)  
Oil, acrylic and mixed media on canvass by Mark Rothko

NEITHER FLESH NOR FLESHLESS

1. God spoke to Moses, saying: Tell the Israelite people to bring me gifts/*terumah* (תְּרוּמָה)... (Exodus 25:1)

רום - v., be exalted

רוֹמְמוּ, יְהִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, לְהַר קֹדֶשׁוֹ  
Exalt Adonai our God, and bow towards His holy hill... (Psalm 99:9)

2. The word *terumah* is comprised of the word Torah and the letter Mem, which has the numerical value of 40. (Rabbi Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov)

In ancient rabbinic thought, a human being achieved its form in the womb over a period of 40 days. Forty is the time it takes for something to go from beginning to fruition. The rabbis taught that 40 are the days between planting and harvest, and 40 are the weeks between conception and birth.

3. When we are at our best, we give not in order to receive; we give in the way that the Hasidic masters speak of the ultimate service to God, the act of *mesirut nefesh* [literally: the handing over of one's soul]....The act of *mesirut nefesh* is a process of transcending the prison of our own egotism and self-centeredness; in the moment of devotion we seek to break open the self-protective walls of our hearts, to make ourselves truly vulnerable to the indwelling of the divine presence....We come to stand in the radiant and transformative presence of God – the divinity that dwells *within*, not only *beyond* the human. (Eitan Fishbane)
4. When we redefine *mesirut nefesh* as pushing oneself beyond one's own myopic expectation and surpassing the limits of what one thought capable of...on the human level the person is becoming extraordinary. *Mesirut nefesh* opens miracles for us: "In the merit of *mesirut nefesh* a person experiences miracles" (Talmud, Berachot 20a). True *mesirut nefesh* is not self-reduction; it is expansion. (Rabbi Yonah Sklare)
5. Interbeing: If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. (Thich Nhat Hahn)
6. At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
(from "Burnt Norton" by T. S. Eliot)