"Open my eyes so that I may see the **wonders** of Your Torah"

נט"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת וַיִּקְרָא ❁ ב-ג נִיסָן תשפ"ו



On Yom Kippur eve in Hebron, Rabbi Azriel brought the Torat Chesed, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin a jug of water for washing his hands. Upon entering the Torat Chesed's room, he saw a form of fire and fell to the ground, fainting (the understanding from his words was that this was the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek).

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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…It would be proper to publish your classes in book form. With blessings for success…"



Wonders

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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FROM THE CHASSIDIC MASTERS

KEDUSHAT LEVI ON THE JOY OF THE SACRIFICES

This week we begin the Book of Leviticus with a detailed description of the various types of sacrifices brought to the Tabernacle's altar. The animal sacrifices are supplemented by plant libations in the form of wine and meal offerings. The categories of animal and plant offerings are compared and contrasted by Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev in Kedushat Levi.

Rav Ginsburgh builds upon the Berditchever's analysis and, in his signature style and method, expands it to include two more categories of offering brought to the altar, creating a four part model that corresponds with the four letters of God's essential Name, Havayah. The completed model is then further contemplated to yield a deeper understanding of the joy inherent in Divine service.

This article first appeared in the Vayikra 5782 issue of Nifla'ot in Hebrew.

Leviticus is dedicated mostly to the various aspects of the service in the Tabernacle and is therefore also known as *Torat Cohanim*, the Torah of the Priests. Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, in the beginning of his commentary on Leviticus, strives to explain the difference between animal sacrifices (קָרְבָּנוֹת) and libations (נְסָכִים), which are made entirely from plant produce. Animals represent abundance that comes from Above. It is, "the abundance that God bestows through His great kindness, without any action on the part of those below." Accordingly, an animal offering, a *korban*, is an open expression of the principle, "give to Him from what is His"[1] (תֵּן לוֹ מִשֶּׁלּוֹ). However, plant produce represents abundance that comes through human labor (plowing, sowing, etc.). That which is produced by human labor is more limited yet therein lies the essence of the experience of joy, born from the sense of partnership in working together with God, as it were; it is therefore said regarding the libations that "one recites the song only over wine,"[2] meaning that a full expression of joy is only possible when a libation is offered on the altar.

In the wilderness, the Jewish people were sustained solely by God's kindness, eating from the *manna* and drinking from Miriam's well, and therefore the primary offering was the animal sacrifice, symbolizing once again sustenance from Above. But in the Land of Israel, human labor is required. This is why the libations are introduced after the Sin of the Spies,[3]

1. *Avot* 3:7.

2. *Arachin* 11a.

3. Numbers 15:1–16.

as part of the announcement of the future entry into the Land of Israel despite the decree that the Israelites would wander the wilderness for 38 more years. From the context of their appearance, the libations are meant to provide a rectification for the Sin of the Spies, by revealing the wondrous quality of the Land of Israel and the importance of human labor within it.

Let us now expand the *Kedushat Levi's* insight into the difference between animal sacrifices and plant libations. Animals and plants are two of the elements in the well-known model of inanimate, vegetative, animal, and human parts of nature. This model is also known by its acronym *Datzcham* (דּוֹמֵם צוֹמֵחַ חַי מְדַבֵּר). Its four parts correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*:

	letter of *Havayah*	category of Creation	offering
"The concealed things (י־ה) are for *Havayah* our God"	*yud*	speaking (human)	
	hei	animal	sacrifice
"and the revealed things (וְהַנִּגְלֹת) belong to us and our children forever."	*vav*	vegetable	libation
	hei	inanimate	

Accordingly, animal sacrifices belong to the realm of "the concealed things are for *Havayah* our God,"[4] while the plant libations belong to realm of "the revealed things belong to us and to our children," the *vav* of *Havayah*, achieved through our own labor (which though it involves constriction, through it the joy of the heart is expressed).

Expanding the *Kedushat Levi's* analysis to include both the speaking part of Creation, i.e., the person bringing the offering and the inanimate, we need to provide examples of both. The offering of the speaking/human level of Creation to the service of the sacrifices is mentioned in the second verse of Leviticus, "When a man from among you brings an offering to *Havayah*."[5] The *Alter Rebbe* explains that wording of the verse suggests that the offering comes from the person who brings it, meaning that the person offers himself (together with his animal soul). When a person brings a sacrifice, he should also be bringing himself, i.e., his animal soul and offering it on the altar. Psychologically, as we shall see, this means recognizing that all that I have accomplished, all my success, really belongs to God. Together, the *yud* (the human level) joins the supernal *hei* (the animal level) in what is known as "the concealed."

4. Deuteronomy 29:28. Specifically, the animal sacrifices placed on the altar correspond to the supernal Mother (*Imma Ila'ah*), representing the Zohar's statement (*Zohar* 2:239a) that, "the mystery of the sacrifice ascends to the mystery of the Infinite" (רָזָא דְּקוּרְבָּנָא עוֹלֶה עַד רָזָא דְּאֵין סוֹף). From the great loving-kindnesses inherent in the supernal Mother, which sweetens all the harsh judgments, then flow down God's abundant blessings.

5. Leviticus 1:2.

The inanimate category also contributes offerings brought to the altar, specifically the water libations (offered on *Sukkot*) and the salt brought with all sacrifices. Together with the plant offerings, they constitute the level known as "the revealed" and correspond to the final two letters of *Havayah*, *vav* and *hei*.

THE JOY OF SERVING GOD

The lower the category in our model, the greater the joy, hence the sages' statement that, "whomever did not see the rejoicing of the Water-Drawing Celebration [ending with the water libation] has never seen rejoicing in his life."[6] Even though inanimate matter does not involve labor akin to sowing, etc., but unlike Miriam's well in the wilderness, which provided water without effort, the act of drawing water involves great toil, and through it comes great joy, as the prophet declares, "You shall draw water with joy from the springs of salvation."[7] The labor required for working the inanimate level of Creation fosters lowliness (*shiflut*) in the form of a willingness to descend ever lower. In turn, lowliness produces great joy, similar to King David's lowliness—"I will be even more lowly in my own eyes"[8]—and joy—"King David was leaping and dancing before God"[9]—when he brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem. It is precisely from this joy that Maimonides[10] derives the model for the joy of the Water-Drawing Celebration:

> It is a great *mitzvah* to maximize this celebration. The common people and anyone who desired would not perform [in these celebrations]; only the greatest of Israel's wise men: the heads of academies, the members of the high court, the pious, the elders, and the men of stature. They were the ones who would dance, clap their hands, sing, and rejoice in the Temple on the days of the festival of Sukkot. However, the entire people—the men and the women—would come to see and hear.

There is another beautiful feature revealed in this model. Though we have associated King David with the lowliness of the fourth level, of the inanimate Water Drawing and water libation, following the principle that "the end is embedded in the beginning,"[11] King David figures just as prominently in the highest level of the human. It is King David who voices the notion that, "all things come from You, and from Your own hand we have given to You"[12] (כִּי מִמְּךָ הַכֹּל וּמִיָּדְךָ נָתַנּוּ לָךְ). This is the Biblical equivalent of the *mishnah* quoted earlier with respect to the animal sacrifices, "give to Him from what is His," and since King David is referring to himself (and the Jewish people) is even more applicable to the highest level—the human being, the speaker—all of whose toil should be recognized as being possible only through God's kindness.

THE EXPERIENCE BEHIND THE OFFERING

Though we cannot currently bring sacrifices to the Temple, we can

6. *Sukkah* 51a.
7. Isaiah 12:3.
8. 2 Samuel 6:22.
9. Ibid. v. 16.
10. *Hilchot Sukkah Velulav* 8:14.
11. *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:7.
12. 1 Chronicles 29:14.

experience the state of being associated with each of these four levels of offering: from offering ourselves and our toil to the water libation. The principle that guides us in understanding the state of being of each of these is that the experience of receiving from Above, from God, which is what accompanies the act of bringing ourselves, i.e., our toil, as a sacrifice is an experience of the *ayin* (nothingness). The experience accompanying the offerings of plant libations and the inanimate ingredients brought to the altar (the third and fourth levels) is one of partnership with the Creator and is akin to an experience of *yesh* (being). The higher we go in the model the more we have an experience of nothingness with less sense of partnership; the lower we go

To better comprehend this structure, let us add that the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*) is considered the beginning of being,[13] the beginning of *yesh* as well as the embodiment of joy. The more an individual feels that he or she is contributing, the more they participate in the outcome, the more joy they experience. In light of this, the four levels of offerings may be described in terms of their experience of either nothingness or of being. The highest level we will describe as nothingness of nothingness (*ayin* of *ayin*). This is what was experienced when a person brought himself as a sacrifice, that is, when they reached a state in which they had complete self-nullification of their entire existence before God. The second level, the hei, can be described as an experience of being within nothingness (*yesh* of *ayin*). This is an experience of God's great loving-kindness as He bestows upon us all His gifts, for example the *manna* and Miriam's well in the wilderness. The third level, corresponding to the plant libations provides an experience of increasing active participation on the individual's part (or, *ayin* within *yesh*) leading to an experience of "You [God] have placed joy in my heart."[14] Finally, the fourth level is an experience of being within being (*yesh* within *yesh*), which is King David's lowliness. Being within being means that created being serves as a vessel through which the eternal being of the Infinite is revealed.

We can now add the description of these experiences to our earlier model:

	letter of *Havayah*	category of Creation	offering	experience
"The concealed things (**י-ה**) are for *Havayah* our God"	*yud*	speaking (human)	the self	nothingness of nothingness
	hei	animal	sacrifice	being of nothingness
"and the revealed things (**וה**נגלת) belong to us and our children forever."	*vav*	vegetable	libation	nothingness of being
	hei	inanimate	water and salt	being of being

13. *Binah* is considered the root of the vessels of Creation, and vessels are what allow for a sense of being.
14. Psalms 4:8.

FIVE DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP: A DRIVE FOR WHOLENESS

We continue our exploration of HaRav Ginsburgh's book, Awakening the Spark Within: Five Dynamics of Leadership that Can Change the World. Having treated the broader vision of leadership and the first of the five dynamics, the art of compromise, we now turn to the second of the five dynamics: the drive for wholeness—a visionary quality that imbues a leader with the ability to inspire others to live a life of meaning and purpose.

In our previous article, we explored the first dynamic of leadership—the art of compromise—and its essential role in fostering peace between individuals and within society. Flowing naturally from this foundation is the second dynamic, one that deepens the first: a drive for wholeness.

The intrinsic connection between these two dynamics is already embedded in the Hebrew language itself. The word *shalom*—peace—also means wholeness, completeness, and perfection. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the manifestation of wholeness. Thus, true leadership does not end with compromise but moves toward a vision of inner and outer completeness.

This second dynamic is activated when a leader sees beyond the present state of affairs and connects to the deeper potential concealed within reality—a future of harmony, rectification, and redemption. It is the ability to envision a utopian Messianic future and to draw that future into the present moment. Although the world, as it stands, is far from perfected, leadership demands the courage to invest one's mental, emotional, and spiritual energies in revealing that future in the here and now. People yearn not only for a better tomorrow, but for a present infused with meaning and hope. A true leader does not merely speak or theorize about a redeemed world but begins to make it tangible for those who walk alongside him or her.

To lead in this way requires stretching beyond one's perceived limits. It demands the willingness to reach past comfort and habit to access one's true potential. This quality is known as *mesirut nefesh*—self-transcendence, the readiness to give oneself fully to a task or cause, even to the point of self-sacrifice for the sanctification of God and Torah.

This type of attitude was articulated powerfully by Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, who taught that when faced with obstacles, one should not first look for a way around them or beneath them, but rather *lechatchilah*

ariber—to leap over them from the outset. This teaching reflects profound spiritual confidence. By aligning with a higher purpose, obstacles lose their power before they fully materialize. Moreover, the greater the challenge, the greater the opportunity for growth. Each leap over limitation becomes a permanent expansion of the self. In certain cases, it may even seem that the inspired leader is living, according to Chasidic thought, "one handbreadth above ground," where miracles start to seem normal.

THE PROPHETS AND MIRACLES

This drive for wholeness is found throughout the *Tanach*, particularly in the books of the Prophets. These visionaries perceived the ultimate redemption of humanity with such clarity that their words continue to inspire today. Because they stretched their consciousness beyond conventional limits, many became vessels for Divine miracles. Their leadership flowed not from seeking authority, but from alignment with a higher reality.

Although tradition counts forty-eight male prophets and seven female prophetesses, the Talmud teaches that there were in fact hundreds of thousands of prophets and prophetesses in Israel.[1] During the era of the First Temple, individuals engaged in meditative and spiritual practices designed to elevate consciousness to be fitting vessels for prophetic experience. The goal was not prophecy for its own sake, but closeness to God and the fulfillment of one's deepest spiritual potential. Seeking spiritual experience for the "high" or thrill of it has always been frowned upon in Jewish tradition.

This ideal is captured in a moment involving Moses, the greatest of all prophets. When Joshua objected to two men prophesying within the camp, Moses responded, "Would it be that all of God's people were prophets!"[2] Leadership in its truest form is not exclusive. The drive for wholeness and indeed all the dynamics of leadership are accessible to every soul.

ESSENTIAL WHOLENESS

The Ba'al Shem Tov articulated a profound principle regarding wholeness: when one grasps a part of an essence (*etzem*), one grasps the entire essence (*etzem*).[3] According to Kabbalah and Chasidut, there are three entities whose very nature is defined by their wholeness: the Torah, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel.

A Torah-scroll missing even a single letter or even part of a letter is invalid for public reading until corrected, because Torah, by definition, must be whole. The Torah is referred to in the Psalms as "The Torah of God is perfect."[4] Similarly, the Jewish people are a single organic entity. If even one Jew is in pain or estranged from Jewish tradition, the wholeness of the entire people is affected. This idea is expressed in the teaching that "All of Israel are responsible one for another."[5]

1. *Megillah* 14a.
2. Numbers 11:29.
3. *Keter Shem Tov* (ed. *Kehot*) addendum 116.
4. Psalms 19:8.
5. *Shevuot* 39a.

The same principle applies to the Land of Israel, which is also inherently whole. Any division or incompleteness within the land reflects an unfinished state that awaits rectification. For this reason, Messianic prophecy consistently centers on the return of the entire Jewish people to the entirety of the Land of Israel, culminating in its full settlement and redemption. Only then will the full redemption of the world, led by the ultimate leader, the Mashiach, be realized.

Alongside these teachings stands a paradoxical statement: "There is nothing as whole as a broken heart."[6] At first glance, this appears contradictory. Yet a broken heart awakens longing for healing, for holiness, and ultimately for a world restored to wholeness. The danger in feeling such brokenness caused by a world where so many are in pain due to wars, hatred, illness, and disillusionment is that one may become distraught, depressed or feel hopeless to rectify the situation. Yet the point of the statement is that precisely by feeling a broken heart so deeply, it does not lead to despair, rather one becomes strengthened to do their part to create peace and wholeness however and whenever possible.

In this spirit, the sages teach that "the secrets of Torah are entrusted only to one who is worried in their heart."[7] This worry does not refer to personal anxiety or material lack, but to an existential awareness of the world's imperfections—the suffering, injustice, and spiritual concealment that still prevail. While faith teaches that all that God does is ultimately for the good[8] and everything is in a sense as it should be, it is equally clear that the world remains unrectified. Its imperfections reflect not a deficiency in Divine perfection, but the accumulated distortions of human choice.

The drive for wholeness then, emerges from this sacred tension, recognizing the world as it is, while refusing to relinquish the vision of what it can and must be. Leadership animated by this dynamic does not wait for redemption, it begins to live it now, drawing the future into the present until wholeness becomes reality.

UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

On a practical level, the drive for wholeness means unifying body and soul, physical and spiritual. Our task is not to flee the physical world or denigrate the body in pursuit of abstract spirituality, but to uplift the physical and infuse it with holiness. This unity lies at the heart of creation itself and explains the purpose of the Torah and its commandments. After Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam's curse, or better stated, the consequence of his actions, was the struggle to sustain himself through physical labor.[9] Yet embedded within this difficulty is the possibility of rectification—the opportunity to sanctify the physical through effort, intention, and purpose.

One of the greatest blessings in life is to love one's work, to experience one's

6. *Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Va'etchanan*.
7. *Chagigah* 13a.
8. *Berachot* 60b.
9. Genesis 3:19.

occupation as a personal mission. When a person's labor becomes an expression of their inner calling, body and soul unite, and life itself reflects wholeness.

A SUSTAINING VISION

The Jewish people have survived centuries of exile sustained by this vision of unity and redemption. Even the act of imagining a redeemed future draws it closer into the present. In his final years, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson urged his followers to learn about Mashiach and to dedicate their lives to making redemption a lived reality. In our own time, as the Jewish people return to their homeland, settling and redeeming the land, and while increasing numbers of Jews reconnect with Torah and Jewish tradition, we begin to experience in the present the reality of the Messianic future.

Just as we are called to uplift the physical and sanctify it, we are also called upon to draw heaven down to earth—to infuse every action with Divine meaning. May each of us be inspired to seek and actualize wholeness in our lives and radiate that energy to others. When enough individuals do so, a critical mass of redemptive energy will be revealed, drawing the ultimate leader, the Mashiach, into reality.

STORY

THE TORAT CHESED OF LUBLIN: AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

Rabbi Shneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin was born in the month of Adar in the year 5590 (1830) in the town of Liadi to his father, Rabbi Shlomo who was a ritual slaughterer in Binskovitz, and to his mother, Eidel. From a young age, he was a distinguished student of the Tzemach Tzedek. After his engagement, he went to study under Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef of Drivin, where he became a Torah scholar. After his marriage, he decided not to earn a living from the rabbinate, but after losing his wealth, the Tzemach Tzedek commanded him to become the rabbi of Polotsk. Indeed, in 5615 (1855), he was appointed to the rabbinate there. After thirteen years, he left Polotsk and turned to the rabbinate of Lublin, where he formed a special bond with Rabbi Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin. They would spend hours together, studying chasidic teachings. Rabbi Shneur Zalman served as rabbi of Lublin for twenty years, and even the Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosen, travelled to study under him in Lublin. The great scholars of his generation testified that he studied Torah for its own sake.

In 5652 (1892), he first expressed his desire to make aliyah to Jerusalem. His community tried to prevent him from doing so, so he went to recuperate at healing springs, and from there "escaped" to Jerusalem. Only upon arriving in Jerusalem did he send his resignation to Lublin. In Jerusalem, Rabbi Shneur Zalman established a chasidic court of Jewish law and a Lubavitch-style slaughterhouse, administered the Chabad Kollel, and headed the Tzemach Tzedek synagogue. It is said that every Yom Kippur eve, his distinguished teacher, the Tzemach Tzedek, would appear to him while he was awake, and they would study Torah together. The Tzemach Tzedek even taught Rabbi Shneur Zalman the secret of receiving kvitlach (prayer notes), a practice usually reserved only for Rebbes. In Jerusalem, his first wife passed away, and then he married his second wife, Yocheved. All the great scholars of Jerusalem, such as Rabbi Shmuel Salant and Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, participated in the wedding.

Although in his last years he was ill, about a month before his passing, in Adar of 5662 (1902) he surprised even his family and said: "I can no longer bear this world of falsehood!!" And on the 5th of Nisan 5662, Rabbi Shneur Zalman returned his soul to its Creator, and at that moment, a storm of lightning and thunder broke out in the streets of Jerusalem. He was laid to rest in the Chabad section on the Mount of Olives.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, author of the responsa *Torat Chesed*, was one of the most prominent Torah scholars of his generation. It is said that his birth was rooted in the blessing of the Alter Rebbe to his grandfather, Rabbi Dov Ber, after his son passed away, "I will comfort you that your daughter will give birth to a son who will illuminate the eyes of Israel." On another occasion, when all the family members passed by the Alter Rebbe except for the daughter Sarah, the Alter Rebbe asked, "Where is she? A great light will come forth from her."

His birth is also associated with a blessing his father received following an incident: Rabbi Shlomo Fradkin was a constructer, and once he built a house for the Tzemach Tzedek. During the construction, the Tzemach Tzedek suddenly came out of his room, and Rabbi Shlomo recoiled in alarm. When the Tzemach Tzedek noticed him, he asked, "Am I a bear?" and proceeded to bless him to merit "sons who are rabbis."

The hope was great, but Rabbi Shneur Zalman was born mute, lacking the power of speech. His father and mother sought doctors but found no cure for his condition. Suddenly, at the age of three, words of Torah began to flow from his mouth and it became clear that for all those three years, he had been listening to Torah but could not speak. Moreover, his first words were an interpretation of Onkelos' translation of the verse "And man became a living soul," which Onkelos translated as, "and it became in man a speaking spirit." People came from all corners of the region to witness this extraordinary wonder: a three-year-old child already proficient in *Chumash* with Rashi and Onkelos.

By age five, he already knew complete

tractates of Talmud thoroughly. When the Tzemach Tzedek visited Liadi, he tested the child on his learning for two consecutive hours and afterwards gave him a quarter of a ruble. The child took the money and said: "In the Book of Samuel, Saul gave the man of God—Samuel—a quarter of silver, and here the man of God gives me a quarter." The Tzemach Tzedek was delighted and blessed him to become great in Torah. Indeed, the boy grew so much that by age eleven, the Tzemach Tzedek gave him questions about *agunot* for his *halachic* opinion.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman was connected in his life to many *tzaddikim*: to the Tzemach Tzedek as a devoted *chasid* and student, and to the Rebbe Moharash—whom Rabbi Shneur Zalman assisted in his appointment as rebbe and to whom he subordinated himself. We can also mention his teacher, the *chasid* Rabbi Eliyahu Yosef Rivlin, in whose footsteps he made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, and his friend Rebbe Tzadok of Lublin. But among them, the connection to the Alter Rebbe, after whom he was named and by whose blessing he was born, is especially prominent.

If we contemplate their shared name, we discover that the second name, Zalman, is not a regular Hebrew name; it is a common translation of the name Shlomo, similar to Solomon. The translated name joins here with the fact that the child prodigy's first words were from Onkelos' translation of the Torah. The numerical value of "Zalman" (**זלמן**) is 127, which is the midpoint of 253, the value of "Onkelos" (**אונקלוס**).

These anecdotes point to a close connection between Rabbi Shneur Zalman and the inner explanation of the verse, "Torah of kindness is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26) the verse after which he chose to name his great book. The Torah of *chesed* (loving-kindness) is Torah learned with the intention of teaching others, to impart the goodness of Torah to those who cannot attain it on their own. This is the purpose of translation in general, and particularly of Onkelos' translation. Onkelos was a righteous convert, the embodiment of one who was distant and came near and therefore understood the need to help others learn Torah in the vernacular.

However, not only those who are distant need Torah that is inviting and brings them near. To draw themselves even closer and to maintain their closeness, even those who are already learned are required to continuously augment their learning. Such was the practice of Rabbi Shneur Zalman himself, who dedicated three hours a day to studying the Torah of the Tzemach Tzedek. He used to say that one cannot cling and connect to a rebbe without studying his Torah teachings. Indeed, the connection he merited was so intense that his Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, would come from the spiritual worlds and study with him while he was awake!

Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak Reisman z"l related what he heard personally from the Rebbetzin of the Torat Chesed:

Once the Torat Chesed's wife heard a conversation between two people in her husband's room, and she knew for a fact that only her husband was alone inside. She approached the door, but the Torat Chesed was already standing in front of the door with both hands on either side, saying to her, "*Der Rebbe der Tzemach Tzedek iz do, nisht dertzeiln*!" (The Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, is here, don't tell!).

All her life she kept silent, and only after his passing did she share this story.

Rabbi Azriel Lieberman of blessed memory related that as a young man, he merited to serve the Torat Chesed. On Yom Kippur eve in Hebron, Rabbi Azriel brought him a jug of water for washing his hands. Upon entering the Torat Chesed's room, he saw a form of fire and fell to the ground, fainting (the understanding from his words was that this was the Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek). The household members woke him from his faint and asked Rabbi Shneur Zalman if they should give him something to eat or drink (even thought it was Yom Kippur). The Rabbi answered that they should lay him on the bed for a short while, after which he got up and went on his way in good health.

FROM THE CLASSIC COMMENTARIES:

IBN EZRA ON THE RATIONALE OF SACRIFICES

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra includes foundational words on the rationale behind the sacrifices. In this short piece, abridged from the original Hebrew, which appeared in the Vayikra 5784 issue of Nifla'ot, Rav Ginsburgh reveals the inner dimension of the Ibn Ezra's sometimes difficult to follow commentary.

MORE THAN ONE RATIONALE FOR EACH COMMANDMENT

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra begins his commentary on the Book of Leviticus with the revelation that a mitzvah can have more than one rationale behind it. Let us see his three types of rationale for the sacrifices and understand them from the perspective of the Torah's inner dimension:

> [Just as] we find two reasons for the covenant made with an individual, it is also possible for one commandment to have many reasons. The commandment regarding the burnt offering and the sacrifice are examples of the latter, for

when the officiant offers each part in its proper time, then the part which has a part in the world to come is saved. Therefore the meaning of *le-khapper* (to make atonement) is to give ransom.

Ibn Ezra claims that just as a covenant has two reasons, physical and spiritual, so a single commandment may have multiple reasons. An example of the first is the commandment of circumcision, which is a covenant with an individual, which has both a physical and a spiritual reason. Similarly, the burnt offering in particular, and sacrifices in general, have many reasons both physical and spiritual.

RANSOM AS ATONEMENT

The first and primary reason is, "when the officiant offers each part in its proper time, then the part which has a portion in the World to Come is saved." In other words, when the person bringing the offering presents each part of the sacrifice in its proper time (at the right moment and in accordance with the law), corresponding to the equivalent part of the human body, then the person is delivered from the decree upon him and merits a portion in the World to Come. This is the meaning of atonement as it applies to sacrifices. The sacrifice serves as a ransom, a substitute, in place of the punishment due to the person (and all this can occur only after the person has already repented before God).

The atonement-as-ransom effected by the sacrifice is based on the correspondence between the body of the sacrificial animal and the body of the person. The portions of the sacrifice eaten by the priests (such as the meat of the sin offering) serve "to sustain the teachers of the Torah."[1] Nachmanides elaborates on this as follows[2]:

> Since human actions are fulfilled by thought, speech, and action, God commanded that when a person sins, he should bring a sacrifice, he shall lay his hands upon it, corresponding to the deed; he confesses verbally, corresponding to speech; and he burns the innards and kidneys, which are the instruments of thought and desire, along with the legs, corresponding to the person's hands and feet that perform all his work; and the blood is dashed upon the altar corresponding to his own blood and life. So that the person, in performing all these acts, should contemplate that he sinned against his God in body and soul, and that it would be fitting for his blood to be spilled and his body burned, were it not for the loving-kindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and atonement—this offering—so that its blood would be in place of his blood, a life in place of a life, the chief limbs of the offering in place of his own chief limbs, and the portions given to the priests to sustain the teachers of the Torah, so that they might pray on his behalf. And the daily burnt offering (the *tamid*) is brought because the multitude cannot be kept from sinning continually. These are compelling and heartfelt ideas, as fitting as words of homily.

Nachmanides supplements the Ibn Ezra

1. *Ibn Ezra loc. cit.*
2. *Nachmanides* on Leviticus 1:9.

by emphasizing that the inner intent of the one bringing the sacrifice should be that it would have been fitting for his own blood to be shed, were it not for God's kindness in accepting the sacrifice as a ransom in his place. He further adds that the portions given to the priests are "so that they may pray on his behalf." And at a deeper level: the reason the animal serves as a ransom for the person is not merely due to external resemblance, but because the sin and deficiency are bound up with the animal dimension within the person himself—referring to the animal soul—and the sacrifice represents the elevation of the animal soul.

PROPHECY AND THE SECRETS OF CREATION

Ibn Ezra continues with two more reasons for the sacrifices. The second reason he notes is that "there are mysteries in the burnt offerings pertaining to future things." By bringing a burnt offering, one attains prophecy and knowledge of future events.[3] The third reason is that "one may contemplate from each sacrifice the secret of Creation." Through careful attention to the details of the sacrifice, one may penetrate the secrets of Creation: from the anatomical wisdom of animals, one arrives at the wisdom of the human body, and from there to the wisdom of the act of Creation in general (for man is a small world, an *olam katan*).

3. Just as Moses's prophecy comes from within the Tabernacle (as Ibn Ezra writes: "He called to Moses...: for the Glory called to him from the Tent of Meeting to come there, and there He would speak with him, the Glory being within the curtain, and it was there that Moses would enter."

The three reasons correspond to the Ba'al Shem Tov's perennial model of submission, separation, and sweetening, or *chash-mal-mal*, as follows: atonement, as though the person had offered himself, corresponds to submission, attained by recognizing that he is deserving of death before God. Understanding the secrets of Creation corresponds to separation, since the unique place of man within Creation and the perfection of his body through the covenant of circumcision, makes him into a "small world." Prophecy corresponds to sweetening, since the Hebrew equivalent *mal* also means to speak or recount (מִלֵּל).[4] To prophecy the future and means to reveal the hidden dimension, the Divinity that continuously constitutes all of existence through the Ten Sayings of Creation.

SACRIFICES BEFORE OTHER COMMANDMENTS

The Ibn Ezra continues:

> The reason for mentioning the sacrifices before the commandments is that the Divine Presence will return to its place [Above] if the law of the burnt offering is not observed; and so it was.

This is an important and fundamental point. Following the Exodus from Egypt, the Giving of the Torah, and the construction of the Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus, the book of Leviticus arrives with two primary divisions: first the matters of sacrifices, and thereafter the matters of other commandments. The sacrifices precede the commandments because the sacrifices are the foundation

4. Genesis 21:7.

for the indwelling of the Divine Presence among Israel—"They shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them"[5]—and if the sacrifices are not maintained, the Divine Presence will withdraw and return to its place, as it was in the destruction of the Temple.

From a Chasidic perspective, the precedence of the mystery of sacrifice over all the commandments corresponds to the manner in which self-sacrifice (*mesirat nefesh*) must precede the performance of all the commandments, and the sanctification of God's Name[6] must precede the performance of a *mitzvah*.

The complete order is thus: Torah, sacrifice, commandment. First, the Giving of the Torah, then the construction of the Tabernacle and the laws of the sacrifices, through which the indwelling of the Divine Presence and prophecy come to Israel, and finally, all 613 commandments (principally from the portion of *Kedoshim* onward). We may add that this will be the order in the Messianic era as well: following the building of the Temple and the indwelling of the Divine Presence, prophecy will spread,[7] and we will arrive at the perfection of the fulfillment of all the commandments.[8]

The inner significance of this order—Torah, sacrifices, commandments—represents the revelation of Divinity from above to below. The Torah is the revelation of God's will (will pertains to *Keter*, the secret of the 620 (כֶּתֶר) letters of the Ten Commandments). Sacrifices pertain to the intellect, *chabad*. Commandments pertains to the emotional faculties of the heart. Meaning that sacrifices are to all other commandments as the intellect is to the emotions. Sacrifices ascribe a special place for thought and intent, as can be seen in the myriad laws surrounding the desired intent the one bringing the offering must have: from the intent that the sacrifice give off a pleasing aroma, and so on, through to thoughts that can invalidate the sacrifice. But, in all practical commandments, the action is primary (though it must be performed out of love and awe, which serve as wings to the deed, and therefore everything pertains to the emotions).

5. Exodus 25:8.

6. The commandment to sanctify God is written in the passive form, וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי, indicating that it happens, as it were, of itself. This is why it is the commandment that will endure into the future when other commandments will be nullified.

7. Until "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 3:1).

8. *Hilchot Melachim* 11:1.

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