

LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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ben Horav Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi חי"ה
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb Dovid Asniel ben Reb Eliyahu ה"ע
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. Devora Rivka bas Reb Yosef Eliezer ה"ע
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Passed away on the second day
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Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

.ת.ג.ב.ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

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Tel.: (323) 934-7095 * Fax: (323) 934-7092

<http://www.torah4blind.org>

e-mail: yys@torah4blind.org

**Rabbi Yosef Y. Shagalov,
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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson



Volume VII: *Shmos*



In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

TETZAVEH

WHY OUR SANCTUARIES REMAIN PURE

The conclusion of the tractate of *Chagigah* — and the entire Order of *Mo'ed* (Festivals) — records a difference of opinion between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages as to why the Golden Altar and the Copper Altar of the Sanctuary¹ were not susceptible to ritual impurity.

Rabbi Eliezer explains that the altars are considered as earth.² Just as earth cannot contract ritual impurity, so too, these altars. Our Sages, by contrast, state that the reason is that the gold or copper coverings were merely an overlay. As such, they were subordinate to (and considered an extension of) the altars' inner material, which was not susceptible to ritual impurity.³

The Torah, which was given by an infinite G-d, is itself infinite. Its lessons are equally relevant at all times and in all

1. The connection of this concept to the weekly portion is reflected in the fact that the conclusion of *Parshas Tetzaveh* speaks about the Golden Altar, while the conclusion of the previous Torah reading, *Parshas Terumah*, speaks about the Copper Altar. The *sichah* to follow is adapted from a letter from the Rebbe to a Society [for the Study] of *Mishnayos* whose members had concluded their study of the Order of *Mo'ed*. [The final *mishnah* of that Order deals with these subjects.] In the letter, the Rebbe emphasizes the spiritual contrasts between these two altars.
2. It is written (*Shmos* 20:21): "You shall make an altar of earth for Me." On this basis, Rabbi Eliezer establishes a comparison between the altar and earth. And on the basis of another verse (*Bamidbar* 3:31), an equivalence is established between both altars (*Chagigah* 27a).
3. For the inner substance of the altars was wood, and an oversized wooden vessel is not susceptible to ritual impurity (*Rashi, Chagigah, ibid.*).

places. It has the same strength now, in the darkness of exile, as when it was given to Moshe on Mount Sinai.

One hallmark of the Torah's infinity is that every concept in it has endless interpretations. In general, these are divided into four categories: *pshat* — the simple meaning, *remez* — an extended meaning or allusion, *derush* — a homily, and *sod* — the underlying mystic concept.⁴

An allusion derived from the teaching mentioned above provides us with lessons relevant to our daily lives, for in his own place, every person serves as a “sanctuary in microcosm” in which the Divine Presence rests.

There were several sacred articles in the Sanctuary and the *Beis HaMikdash*. Similarly, within our individual “sanctuaries” there are “sacred articles”: our intellect, our feelings, and the like. In these matters, there is the possibility for “ritual impurity;” selfish intent, secular influence, or an unholy thought may creep in. There is even the possibility of sin, doing the opposite of G-d’s will, and acting in conflict with the directives of the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

Continuing the analogy, sin makes a person’s “sacred articles” — his thoughts or feelings — impure. It thus becomes necessary to devise a means whereby that “sacred article” can be returned to G-d’s sanctuary. For G-d’s sanctuary — every Jewish man, woman, and child — must be pure.

With regard to material matters, and similarly with regard to spiritual potential, mankind is divided into the rich and the poor. Gold serves as an analogy for the rich,⁵ while the poor are associated with copper.⁶

4. See *Shaar HaGilgulim*, preface 17.

5. See *Bava Basra* 25b, which cites *Iyov* 37:22 “Gold will be brought from the north,” and which says that a person who wants to become rich should face north (the direction of the Golden Table) when he prays.

6. See the interpretation of the *Mishnah* (*Bava Metzia* 4:1).

The core of every Jew's Jewishness, the *pinteles Yid*, remains intact, regardless of the inner or outer dimensions of his personality. And this aspect of his being has one desire: to fulfill G-d's will. As my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, would say:⁷ "No Jew desires to — nor can he — sever his bond with G-d."

Accordingly, every Jew can be considered an altar for G-d. For what is an altar? A place where one slaughters one's *yetzer hora* and brings a sacrifice for G-d.

This concept is relevant to all Jews: both the rich (who can be compared to the Golden Altar), and the poor (who are likened to the Copper Altar). The true desire of every one is to slaughter the *yetzer hora* and fulfill G-d's will.

As mentioned, the altars are not susceptible to ritual impurity. The two rationales given can also be interpreted in the context of our Divine service. The first rationale holds that the altars are considered like the earth. This refers to the quality of humility, as we say in our prayers:⁸ "May my soul be as dust to all." Just as everyone treads on the earth, so too a humble person has no self-concern, and no desire other than to fulfill G-d's will as expressed in the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

This is the rationale taught by Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus. Rabbi Eliezer was referred to as "Rabbi Eliezer the Great," and was considered "equivalent to all the other Sages of Israel."⁹ Nevertheless, he remained so humble that he "never mentioned a teaching that [he] had not heard from [his] teachers."¹⁰

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7. *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. IV, p. 547; *HaYom Yom* entry 21 Sivan, 25 Tammuz.
 8. The passage *E-lohai Netzor*, recited at the conclusion of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 61.
 9. *Avos* 2:9.
 10. *Sukkah* 27b, 28a.

This approach enabled him to see the inner dimension of every Jew's character, appreciating the level of which it is said:¹¹ "Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one," i.e., a Jew's entire life consists of the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*. Rabbi Eliezer taught his students that intellect and *bittul* (self-transcendence) are not opposites, and indeed complement each other, as reflected in his own Divine service: "never mention[ing] a teaching that [he] had not heard from [his] teachers."

The Sages offer a second rationale, for they feel that Rabbi Eliezer's approach is too difficult for the general public. They instead thought about a Jew's external dimension. For it may happen that a person will stumble within his path of Divine service. This is particularly true with regard to a Jew who can be compared to a Golden Altar. Since he is involved with matters concerning gold, he may be distracted, and for a brief time may ignore the fulfillment of G-d's will. Similarly, a Jew who can be compared to a Copper Altar may be confronted by financial straits that cause him to violate G-d's will. Nevertheless, our Sages maintain that these occasional transgressions cause neither the rich Jew nor the poor Jew to become impure.

The reasoning is that both the gold and the copper are superficial coverings. The inner dimension of every Jew remains immune to impurity. Moreover, this inner dimension is so powerful that the external dimension becomes subordinate to it. In other words: every person will ultimately turn to G-d in *teshuvah* and appreciate the Truth. He will grasp that a Jew's life is solely G-dliness, and that this G-dliness can be tapped only through the study of the Torah, and observance of the *mitzvos*.

11. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 73a.

Moreover, such conduct is the medium which enables us to receive the blessings which G-d promises, as it is written:¹²

12. *Vayikra* 26:3-4.

To briefly explain the above on a deeper level: As stated in the *Tzemach Tzedek's*, *Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvas Binyan HaMikdash*, ch. 2, there were four sacred articles of fundamental importance in the *Beis HaMikdash*: the *Menorah*, the Golden Table, and the two Altars. These articles correspond to the attributes *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, and *Malchus*. The *Menorah* and the Golden Table, corresponding to *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, were susceptible to ritual impurity, as stated in the first clause of the *mishnah*.

In contrast, the Altars are associated with the middle vector (see also *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 51a and 60a), and the middle vector “ascends to the inner dimensions of Kesser.”

This also relates to the Ark, located in the Holy of Holies, which contained the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. The ark was entombed because it is not possible that gentiles would attain power over it.

Nevertheless, a reason must be given why the altars cannot contract impurity. For although they are represented by the middle vector, they are represented by attributes which are limited in nature.

The reason given by Rabbi Eliezer is that they are considered like earth, i.e., they reflect the utter selflessness that characterizes the quality of *Kesser* (*Hosafos l'Torah Or*, the beginning of *Megillas Esther*). There is indeed an explicit verse which identifies the external altar with earth, as it is written: “You shall make an altar of earth for Me.” This is stated explicitly only with regard to the external altar, the level of *Malchus*, because “the end is rooted at the beginning, and the beginning at the end (*Sefer Yetzirah* 1:7).” Therefore, in the destruction of the vessels of the World of *Tohu*, “the earth (alone) became nullified.”

With regard to the altars themselves, the inner altar is identified with *Tiferes d'Zaer Anpin*, and is thus considered “rich” when compared to the external altar identified with *Malchus*, of which it is said (*Zohar I*, 33b): “It has nothing of its own.”

The reason that the altars did not require *tevilah* (טבילה), which is identified [*Siddur Im Dach*, p. 159d] with *bittul* (ביטול), is because they themselves are expressions of *bittul*. Two reasons are given for this: they are considered like earth, and their surface is subordinate to their inner substance.

Rabbi Eliezer refers to the essence of G-d, as reflected by the association (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:7) of his name with the verse (*Shmos* 18:4): אל-הָ אֱבִי-בָּרְאֵי “The G-d of my father provided assistance for me.” He is called “the Great,” and it is said (*Megillah* 31a): “In the place of His greatness, there you find His humility.” While looking at the external dimensions of existence, he was able to perceive the inner dimension. Thus the fact that the external substance of the altar was subservient to its inner substance was not significant for him, so he gave another rationale. For according to his conception, the external substance was always *batel*, for “There is nothing, [but Him] (*Devarim* 4:39, see the explanation in *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud*, ch. 6).”

TETZAVEH

“And if you walk in My statutes and observe My commandments... the land will provide its yield, and the trees of the field will give their fruit.”

(Adapted from a letter, 15 MarCheshvan, 5711)



The Sages differ, and the *halachah* follows their opinion, for “[Torah law] is not in the heavens (cf. *Devarim* 30:12),” but rather is determined according to the principles which prevail within the spiritual cosmos (*Seder HaHishtalshelus*). On this level, the external surface of the altar could be susceptible to ritual impurity, except that since it is *batel* to its inner substance, it is not. This is not the place for further elaboration concerning this matter.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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Further, and this is essential, to cry to G-d about the length of the exile, "Until when"... and to beseech and entreat and do everything possible so that the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach will come imminently and immediately.

The Jewish people find themselves in exile already **more than nineteen hundred years** and our righteous Moshiach has still not come!... All the Divine service of exile has already been completed, and we have already done everything in every way possible (including in particular the rejoicing of the month of Adar for sixty days). It's unknown what else is to be done. Nevertheless, **another week, another day, another moment** has passed, and still the true and complete Redemption has not yet come in actual reality!

(From the talk of Tuesday, the eve of Shabbos Kodesh, Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Titzaveh, the 7th, 10th and 11th of Adar Rishon, 5752)

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ת. ג. ב. ה.

(מנוסח המצבה)

*

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק הלוי זוגתו מרת גיטל רחל שיחיו שגלוּב

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.ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

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