

BESURAS HAGEULO

increase in “our actions and our service” in general that bring the Redemption, including and particularly - as talked about in the previous gathering - learning the Torah concerning Redemption, in the Written Torah (that “all¹⁴ the books are filled with this subject”) and the Oral Torah: Mishneh, Gemara, Midrashim, etc.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim, 13 Iyar 5751)

14. Rambam, *Laws of Kings*, chapter 11, halacha 2.

IN HONOR OF

Chaya Mushka שתחיל Muchnik

On the occasion of her birthday, 26 Nissan, 5779

AND IN HONOR OF HER SISTER

Devorah Leah שתחיל Muchnik

On the occasion of her 7th birthday,

Shabbat Parshat Acharei, 29 Nissan, 5779

AND IN HONOR OF THEIR SISTERS AND BROTHERS שיחיו

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride to their family and a Torah light to their community.

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. **Dov** and **Racheli** שיחיו Muchnik

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

actions and large, positive reforms that he would introduce to strengthen education in the country.

...And this is in addition to the many things that daily occur by Divine Providence, whether in general or in relation to each one in their personal matters. The purpose of all this is to reveal even more how the world is helping to make a dwelling place for G-d in this lowest world and bring the Redemption.

(This includes the discovery last week of precious stones and pearls in the farthest corner of the world, through the blessings of G-d. (This is analogous to “The princes brought the onyx stones and the stones for the ephod and breastplate.”¹¹ (These were used for the priestly garments, that were [miraculously] brought to them by the clouds.¹²) The intention is they should be used for adorning brides, increasing tzedekah, etc.)

The practical conclusion of what has been said is: the Redemption comes precisely through the service in exile, from revealing the master of the world in “exile,”¹³ so that this generation, the last generation of exile, will be the first generation of Redemption.

And G-d helps us see in the recent world events how the world itself is assisting and leading to the Redemption.

This simply means - as mentioned above - that every Jew must

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg
Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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11. *Vayakhel* 35:27.

12. *Targum Yonasan* on the verse.

13. [There is a play on words in the Hebrew: exile is “golah” and redemption is “geulah.” The difference between them in Hebrew is the letter “Aleph.” The word “Alufo” means L-rd or master. The letter “Aleph” also has the numerical value of one. Thus, the “Master of the world” is the “Alufo of the world.” He is also the “Alef” - the only One. By revealing the “Alufo,” the “Alef” is also revealed, which transforms “golah” (without an alef) into “geulah” (with an alef). Translator’s note.]

BESURAS HAGEULO

Among the obvious things which occurred very recently, where we see how the world and the nations of the world are preparing and assisting the way to the Redemption, are the areas of tzedekah and education, two fundamental foundations for civilizing the world, “He formed it to be inhabited.”⁹

The recent events have become well-known and publicized (in all the newspapers). This country (founded on tzedekah and kindness, as is known) has used its great power to help and rescue people in a distant region of the world (far away from the country), even though the citizens of this country receive no direct benefit.

This country sent many people and soldiers from its army to assist the refugees in those places, together with food, clothing and medicine. Instead of using the planes for conquest, and instead of using the food and clothing for its own citizens, it used them to rescue unfortunate people, particularly small children, from the cold, and indeed, from the very opposite of life.¹⁰

One sees thereby the compassion of the citizens of this country: when they heard and saw the suffering of others, not their own relatives, and with whom they had no connection - the country was aroused to help them. According to the principles of this country regarding tzedekah, it helps people throughout the whole world, and it doesn't even wait to be asked to help.

Similarly, it's also known that recently the leader of this country came out with a declaration and detailed directive regarding children's education. This was consistent with a declaration the president made at the beginning of his tenure, concerning his ambition to be remembered as the “education president” for the

9. *Yeshayahu* 45:18.

10 [The Rebbe - in the spirit of the Talmudic dictum to employ clean and positive language - frequently employed the euphemism “the opposite of life.” Translator's note.]

LIKKUTEI SICHOT

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

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Volume VIII: *Vayikra*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

ACHAREI

THE DEATH OF AHARON'S SONS

Our Torah reading begins with the verse:¹ “G-d spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon’s two sons [Nadav and Avihu], who drew close to G-d and died.” One might ask: Why does the verse conclude “and died”? It *begins* by mentioning the two deaths.

The resolution of this question requires a comprehensive approach. The *Midrash* mentions several possible reasons for the two deaths. Among them:

- a) they entered the Holy of Holies;²
- b) they did not wear all the required priestly garments while offering their sacrifice;³
- c) they had not married or fathered children.⁴

The questions arise: Where are the allusions to these sins in the verse? And more fundamentally, how was it possible for Nadav and Avihu to commit such sins? Our Sages state⁵ that Moshe had told Aharon: “I knew that the Sanctuary would be consecrated by the death of those close to G-d. I

And they will bring all your brethren, etc.).

And in this last year we see how this attitude towards the Jewish people has spread to other countries, even to that country,⁴ which (until recently) placed limitations on the freedom of the Jews in their observance of Torah and mitzvos, and also on their emigration from that country. Their attitude has now been reversed, for they permit Jews to observe Torah and mitzvos and allow Jews to leave there (without the previous restrictions). On the contrary - they are now helping the Jews to travel to the Holy Land. This is a prelude of the assistance the nations of the world will give the Jewish people to go out of exile and into the Holy Land, in the complete and true Redemption.

In addition to the direct assistance from the nations of the world to the Jews, we also see instances where the nations of the world themselves perform acts of goodness and kindness, which reveal even more that there is a Master to this palace.⁵ All of this is a preparation for “And the kingdom will be the L-rd’s”⁶ in the complete and true Redemption.

It was not this way previously, when specifically the Jewish people (even though “You are the smallest of all the nations”⁷) accomplished the intention of making a dwelling place in the lower world,⁸ while several governments of the nations of the world behaved in a cruel fashion to each other. Their main occupation was their own benefit, either by conquering the other countries, etc.

1. Vayikra 16:1.
 2. Toras Kohanim, Parshas Acharei; Vayikra Rabbah 20:8, Bamidbar Rabbah 2:23; Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Acharei, sec. 6.
 3. Vayikra Rabbah, loc. cit.:9; Midrash Tanchuma, loc. cit.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Toras Kohanim, Shemini; Zevachim 115b, quoted by Rashi’s commentary to Vayikra 10:3.

4. [The Soviet Union. Translators note.]
 5. See *Bereishis Rabba* beginning of chapter 39.
 6. The end of *Ovadyah*.
 7. *Va’eschanan* 7:7.
 8. [The Previous Rebbe explains in his discourse *Basi L’gani* that G-d’s intention behind creation was to make a dwelling place for G-dliness in even the lowest physical realm of existence, that is, this world. Translator’s note.]

From what was said previously, one may discover several lessons regarding the service of the Jews to bring the Redemption, and what must be done to prepare for the Redemption, as we stand now at the end of exile, “golah,” with the Redemption coming momentarily.

...Worldly affairs themselves and the nations of the world themselves (even in the time of exile) are (in truth) assisting in the service of bringing the Redemption.

It may be suggested that at the end of the time of exile, close to the Redemption, this assistance appears in a more open fashion.

We see this especially in the recent generations and even more in recent times, specifically in the latest days:

In previous generations, (most) Jews lived among countries which in general were a hindrance and an obstacle, etc. ([the trouble] will not rise twice)¹ to the service of G-d.

However, in recent generations, (most) Jews live among benevolent governments, primarily this country² (in which the largest number of Jews and Jewish institutions are located). This enables the Jews to achieve an inner Redemption in their service, so that they should perform the service which will bring the actual Redemption. Then the benevolent government will also help the Jews to return to the land of Israel (in the language of Scriptures:³

1. The language of Scriptures - *Nachum* 1:9. And see *Likkutei Sichos* volume 23, page 306, note 55.
 2. [The United States. Translator’s note.]
 3. *Yeshayahu* 66:20.

thought it would be me or you. Now I see that they, [Nadav and Avihu,] are greater than us.” How could individuals on such a spiritual plane commit such a severe sin?

YEARNING AND RETURNING

In *Chassidus*⁶ (and similarly, in the commentary of the *Or HaChayim*⁷), it is explained that the sin of Aharon’s sons differs from sin as we usually understand it. Their sin involved allowing themselves to cling to G-d so totally that their souls simply left their bodies. This is implied by the words “who drew close to G-d and died,” i.e., their drawing close to G-d was the cause of their death.

This is considered a sin. Every Jew must endeavor to rise above material consciousness and reach *hispashtus hagashmiyus*.⁸ Nevertheless, this thrust towards spiritual ascent should be balanced. The yearning for G-d referred to as *ratzu* should be coupled with *shuv*, dedication to Divine service on the material plane, fulfilling the mission of making our world G-d’s dwelling.

This is the intent of our Sages’ statement:⁹ “Against your will, you live.” Instead of leaving our bodies, as they might like to do, our souls must shoulder the burden of refining the world and steering it towards its destiny. Nadav and Avihu rejected this mission, manifesting a yearning for G-d with no downward thrust. This was their sin.

To highlight this concept, the verse states “and they died” although it already mentioned their death. What was their sin? That after they drew close to G-d they died; they allowed

6. See the *maamar* entitled *Acharei Mos*, 5649 (and 5722).
 7. In his commentary at the beginning of *Parshas Acharei*.
 8. See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, the conclusion of sec. 98; *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 4:5.
 9. *Avos*, the conclusion of ch. 4; see *Tanya*, ch. 50.

their souls to expire. Their yearning was not balanced with a commitment to worldly service.¹⁰

Based on the above, we can now detect allusions to the sins mentioned by our Sages: They entered the Holy of Holies

10. In this context, reference can be made to the discussion of this theme on another occasion (*Sichos, Shabbos Parshas Acharei, Shabbos Mevorchim Iyar, 5722*):

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, related that when the Alter Rebbe returned after accompanying Reb Menachem Mendel of Horadok to *Eretz Yisrael*, he noticed that the students of the *chadarim** which he had established were conducting themselves in an intemperate manner, secluding themselves from the world at large.

The Alter Rebbe addressed them: “Students of the *chadarim*: Know that our Divine service must be carried out within the world; ‘eat[ing] [your] bread on a sword’s blade (*Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 188b),’ effecting change within the world.”

These few measured words brought about a metamorphosis within the students. After a certain amount of time passed, the Alter Rebbe addressed them again: “‘Eat[ing] [your] bread on a sword’s blade,’ can be interpreted to mean that the sword itself must be eaten.”

These were the statements of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe.

To explain: At the outset, material existence appears to oppose holiness. One must, however, commit oneself to working with it, bending one’s nature (*iskafia*). This involves a war {“eating (and this term can imply the entire realm of our efforts within the material realm) on the blade of a sword”}, in which we struggle to refine the sparks of G-dliness in the world at large.

After this endeavor has been successful, one’s material environment is transformed and becomes an asset (*ishopcha*). War is no longer necessary. On the contrary, a person must “eat the sword,” and carry out his Divine service in peace.

This approach to Divine service prepares the world, readying it for the Future Redemption to be initiated by *Mashiach*. Indeed, *Mashiach*’s name will be *Shalom* (“peace,” the conclusion of *Derech Eretz Zuta*). For he will introduce peace throughout existence, fulfilling the prophecies (*Yeshayahu* 11:6): “A wolf will live with the lamb, and a lion will eat straw like cattle.”

* At the very beginning of the *Chabad* chassidic movement, the Alter Rebbe gathered together young men with excellent capabilities who had proven themselves in the realm of study, including several prodigies, and organized them into classes to whom he taught *chassidus*. There were three such classes, and each was referred to as a *cheder*.

To be accepted into even the first *cheder*, one had to have a commanding knowledge of *Talmud*, *Midrash*, and the philosophical texts of the *Ikkarim* and the *Kuzari*, and be well-versed in the *Zohar*. (See *Kuntres Toras HaChassidus*, p. 21, and *Sefer HaSichos Kayitz 5700*, p. 26.)

when “you follow My statutes and keep My *mitzvos*... I will grant you your rain at the appropriate time.”

(Adapted from the *maamar* and *sichos*, *Yud-Alef Nissan*, 5722)



This truth is also reflected in the connection between the High Priest's entry into the Holy of Holies and his departure, at which time he would recite a prayer for the Jews' material prosperity. For the inner bond established in the Holy of Holies is the source for the material influence the Jews receive. This bond brings abundant prosperity, drawing down unlimited influence that reflects the limitless nature of its source.

A MAN IS NOT ALONE IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

As mentioned above, one of the conditions that had to be met before the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies was that he be married. The implication is that the ability to "enter in peace and depart in peace" is dependent on Jewish women. Even when a man is in "the Holy of Holies," his wife shares a connection with him.³⁸

Jewish women have the opportunity and the obligation to influence the spiritual state of their husbands and children, enabling them to connect their entry into a state of holiness to their departure from that state.

A woman should not worry if her husband spends an extra hour at prayer or in study; it will not cause them any material loss. Similarly, a mother does not have to be concerned that training her children to study Torah the entire day might stifle their financial future. Indeed, the opposite is true. Women must encourage their husbands and children, explaining that an increase in the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* will amplify their material prosperity. For

he had previously drawn down influence from G-d's inner will. (See *ibid.*, *maamar* 7, ch. 4; *maamar* 11, ch. 2.)

38. See the *Chiddushei Aggados* of the Maharsha, *Shabbos* 118b, entry *Lo kerisi lishti*.

— their yearning for G-d without thought of worldly involvement propelled them further and further into the Sanctuary, without concern for any limits, beyond the possibility of return.

They did not wear all the required priestly garments. The term "garments" is used as an analogy for *mitzvos*,¹¹ for our observance of *mitzvos* is enclothed in material entities. Nadav and Avihu did not devote themselves to the observance of *mitzvos* on the material plane.¹² Instead, they desired to transcend this frame of reference and cling to G-d in an utterly spiritual manner.

They had not married or fathered children. They did not endeavor to bring souls into this world. On the contrary, their Divine service had an opposite thrust: to rise above the body altogether.¹³

FULFILLING G-D'S WILL RATHER THAN ATTAINING INDIVIDUAL HEIGHTS

Rashi states that the purpose of the instruction:¹⁴ "Do not enter the [inner] Sanctuary at all times.... It is in this manner that he should enter the Sanctuary" was to warn Aharon and his descendants not to engage in the kind of Divine service practiced by Nadav and Avihu, lest they suffer the same fate.

11. See *Tanya*, ch. 5, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 29.

12. [Needless to say, they observed all the *mitzvos* fastidiously. They did not, however, consider this as the focus of their efforts.]

13. Based on the above, we can understand the connection of this verse to Yom Kippur (for which it serves as the beginning of the Torah reading). Although this verse does not mention the sacrificial offerings of that holy day, its theme is fundamental to the day.

On Yom Kippur, the Jewish people resemble the angels [*Tur, Orach Chayim* sec. 606, 619] and spend the entire day in holiness. Therefore the Torah reading begins by warning us that our yearning for G-d should be balanced by a commitment to involve ourselves in worldly activities (*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Acharei*, 5722).

14. *Vayikra* 16:2-3.

Our yearning for G-d (*ratzu*) must be genuine. One must feel a complete and total commitment to Him, loving Him “with all one’s might” (*bichol meodecho*).¹⁵ The Hebrew term *meodecho* (מֵעֵדֶךָ) is rooted in the word *meod* (מְאֹד), meaning “very,” i.e., a person’s love for G-d must be excessive, taking him beyond his natural limitations. As long as one’s love can be associated with a motivating rationale, or has limits, it is not “with all your might.” The question thus arises: When a person is roused to a state of yearning that knows no boundaries, how can he prevent his soul from expiring, and instead return to serving G-d on the material plane?

One must exercise caution in this regard from the very first stages of yearning for G-d. A person’s yearning must not be the result of a desire for personal good; one should not seek the satisfaction referred to in the verse:¹⁶ “Closeness to G-d is my good.” Instead, one should desire to draw close to G-d in order to carry out His will, to “love G-d with all your might.”

When a person’s intent is not to satisfy his own personal desires, but rather to fulfill G-d’s will, he will sense the Divine intent present within material entities, as reflected in the verse:¹⁷ “He did not create [the world] to be chaotic, but rather He formed it to be settled.” And because of the person’s identification with G-d’s intent, his yearning for G-dliness will develop in a way that allows the *ratzu* to be balanced by *shuv*. After seeking unity with G-dliness, he will again turn earthward, endeavoring to refine this material plane.

15. *Devarim* 6:5.

16. *Tehillim* 73:28.

17. *Yeshayahu* 45:18.

This resolve must be taken at the outset. A person must “enter in peace,” i.e., one’s goal should be the attainment of inner peace through a connection of his material experience with G-d. This approach will enable him to “depart in peace,” As a result of his spiritual experience on Yom Kippur, he will be able to pursue his worldly endeavors “for the sake of heaven,”³² and indeed come to “know G-d in all your ways.”³³

A FOUNTAIN OF BLESSING

The connection between the spiritual heights a Jew reaches on Yom Kippur and his worldly activity encompasses more than our spiritual mission in the world. All the material blessings we receive are connected with our Divine service. For the material influence which a Jew receives — his health, children, and prosperity — is granted directly by G-d, who promises: “If you follow My statutes and keep My *mitzvos*... I will grant you your rain at the appropriate time.”³⁴ A Jew receives rain (and all the material influence it symbolizes³⁵) only through observing the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

There are those who say “I will have peace although I follow my heart’s desires,”³⁶ expecting that they will not be denied material prosperity although they follow their heart’s desires unchecked. Such people should realize that: a) any prosperity that might come their way does not stem from holiness; and b) it is therefore only temporary. For the life energy of every Jew has a direct connection with holiness.³⁷

32. *Avos* 2:12.

33. *Mishlei* 3:6. Note the *sichah* to *Parshas Terumah* in this series, which discusses these two quotes and the levels of Divine service associated with each.

34. *Vayikra* 26:3-4.

35. The Hebrew word *geshem* means both “rain” and “material existence.”

36. *Devarim* 29:18.

37. See *Kuntres U'Mayon, maamar* 10. Moreover, the possibility for a Jew to temporarily receive material prosperity from the realm of evil exists only because

instruction not only for an exclusive spiritual elite, but for every Jew. But it appears that the relevance of the story of Nadav and Avihu is indeed restricted to a select few. For seemingly rare is the individual spurred by such an insatiable thrust for G-d that he has to be reminded that *ratzu* must be accompanied by *shuv*. What is the relevance of this story for the majority of the Jewish people, and — since the Torah is relevant for *all* Jews — to those whose spiritual level is below that of the majority?

This question can be resolved as follows: Every Jew becomes spiritually aroused from time to time. There are occasions — for example on *Shabbos* or on the festivals — when the spiritual influences revealed from above trigger a deeper connection with G-d. This is especially true during the Ten Days of Repentance, a time to which our Sages applied³⁰ the verse:³¹ “Seek G-d while He may be found.” And within those ten days, Rosh HaShanah, and even more so Yom Kippur, stand out as times in which a Jew is inspired to rise above his ordinary concerns.¹³

When a Jew on this earthly plane has his attention drawn upwards in a yearning for G-d, he must realize that this *ratzu* must be counterbalanced by a movement toward *shuv*. The way he enters this spiritual experience relates directly to the way he will depart from that experience.

To state this concept in personal terms: The heights of inspiration which a person feels on Yom Kippur should not be separated from his ordinary worldly existence. Instead, a person must resolve to connect the spiritual arousal he feels on Yom Kippur with his day-to-day experience.

30. *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

31. *Yeshayahu* 55:6.

The above concepts let us understand a celebrated *Talmudic* passage:¹⁸

Four entered into [a mystic experience referred to as] the *Pardes*.... Ben Azzai glanced and died.... Ben Zoma glanced and was injured.... Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and departed in peace.

On the surface, the difference between Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues was noticeable only afterwards, when Rabbi Akiva “departed in peace.” Why is it necessary to mention that he “entered in peace”? Seemingly, there was no difference between his entry and that of his colleagues.

The answer is that there *was* a difference, and this affected the manner of their departures. Rabbi Akiva approached this mystic experience in a different manner than his colleagues. Ben Azzai, who “glanced and died,” manifested *ratzu* without the moderation of *shuv*.¹⁹ He entered into the *Pardes* with a yearning for G-d that led to the expiration of his soul; to put it simply, he was not grounded.²⁰ Similar concepts apply with

18. *Chagigah* 14b, 15b. The standard text of the *Babylonian Talmud* differs slightly. The above wording is found in the *Jerusalem Talmud* (*Chagigah* 2:1) and in the *Ein Yaakov*.

19. Indeed, his Divine service as a whole was characterized by the thrust of *ratzu*. Therefore he chose not to father children, saying (*Yevamos* 63b): “What shall I do? My soul desires the Torah,” following a course similar to that of the sons of Aharon. In that light we find two different opinions with regard to Ben Azzai: one that he married but did not father children, and one that he did not even marry (*Sotah* 4b; see also *Tosafos*, *Kesubos* 63a; *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Ishus* 15:3).

20. The above refers to Ben Azzai’s entry into the *Pardes*. With regard to his prior conduct, although it followed the general thrust of *ratzu*, it did not lack *shuv* entirely. For he was involved in Torah study, which draws G-dly energy to this material plane. Accordingly, our Sages ruled that one who follows Ben Azzai’s example “is not guilty of a sin” (see *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:1, see also the *Kuntres Acharon*). Within the approach of *Tikkun* itself, however, such a pattern of Divine service reflects a thrust of *ratzu*, and not one dedicated to maintaining the world. (See the *Kuntres Acharon*, *ibid.*)

regard to Ben Zoma.²¹ These Sages did not demonstrate a thrust of *shuv* afterwards because, when they entered the *Pardes*, they did not “enter in peace.”

Rabbi Akiva, by contrast, “departed in peace,” *because* “he entered in peace.”²² He entered with the intent of fulfilling G-d’s will and establishing “peace between the heavenly fellowship and the earthly fellowship.”²³ Because he entered with this intent, he departed whole, “in peace.”

On this basis, we can appreciate the purpose of the instructions:¹⁴ “Do not enter the [inner] Sanctuary at all times.... It is in this manner that he should enter the [inner] Sanctuary.... And he should atone for himself and his household.” The intent is to caution against a thrust of *ratzu* without an accompanying movement of *shuv*.

21. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 2:4.

22. This does not contradict Rabbi Akiva’s statement (*Berachos* 61a) that throughout his life he was waiting for the opportunity to demonstrate his love for G-d “with all your soul,” interpreted as “even if your soul is taken.” For although Rabbi Akiva longed for actual *mesirus nefesh*, “self-sacrifice,” his life was directed to this world. He waited for G-d to grant him the opportunity of *mesirus nefesh*. This is reflected in the expression he used “When will I be granted the opportunity....”

Nadav and Avihu, by contrast, drew themselves close to G-d. The intense intimacy which led to their passing came on their initiative. In this context, a distinction can be made between their passing and that of the three [disciples of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai,] who died during the *Idra Rabba* (*Zohar*, Vol. III, 144a). The passing of the latter is not considered a sin, because to borrow the wording of the *Or HaChayim*, *Vayikra* 16:1): “[G-d’s] kiss approached them; they did not approach it.” (See also the *maamar* entitled *Acharei* from the year 5675.)

There is, however, a level which exceeds even that of Rabbi Akiva, and that is the self-sacrifice manifested by Avraham, our Patriarch (see the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *HaChodesh HaZeh*, 5700). Rabbi Akiva sought to reach the spiritual peaks of *mesirus nefesh*. But when sacrificing his soul conflicted with G-d’s intent, he was willing to forego the heights he could have reached. Avraham, by contrast, did not think of his spiritual heights at all. His only desire was to spread G-dliness throughout the world (*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Acharei*, 5722).

23. Cf. *Sanhedrin* 99b.

For this reason, the command begins “Do not,”²⁴ i.e., the emphasis is on self-nullification, that a person should not seek only personal closeness to G-d, but rather should desire nothing else but the fulfillment of G-d’s will.

Thus “Do not enter the Sanctuary at all times,” serves as a step leading to: “It is in this manner that he should enter the Sanctuary.” The Hebrew word *Zos*, translated as “this manner,” is interpreted by the *Zohar*²⁵ as referring to awe of G-d and *bittul*, which are “gateways ascending upward.”²⁶ Such an approach enables Aharon to enter the inner Sanctuary in a state of *ratzu*, and yet “atone for himself and his household,” thus preserving the connection with his wife (the *Talmudic* interpretation²⁷ of the word “household”). Indeed, based on this verse, our Sages²⁶ state that if a High Priest is not married, he may not enter the Holy of Holies. For the ultimate purpose of a person’s desire to come close to G-d should be that the experience add vitality to his efforts to refine the material world.

This is reflected in the short prayer which the High Priest would recite directly after entering the Holy of Holies. Then he would solicit G-d’s blessing for success with regard to the Jewish people’s endeavors to earn their livelihood.²⁸

WHERE OUR SPIRITUAL QUEST SHOULD LEAD

The word Torah is derived from *horoah*, meaning “instruction.”²⁹ All the stories related by the Torah provide

24. See *HaYom Yom*, entry 27 Adar II, printed in the addendum to the *maamar* entitled *Acharei*, 5649.

25. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 108a.

26. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 8a.

27. *Yoma* 2a.

28. *Ibid.* 53b. Note the wording used by the Alter Rebbe in his *Siddur’s Musaf* service for Yom Kippur in description of this prayer.

29. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 53b.