

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Acharei, 5782
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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. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Acharei

OFFERING THE ESSENCE

This week's Torah reading describes the Yom Kippur service in the Sanctuary. This anticipates the natural state of affairs during the times of Moshiach. Then the volitional, external mode of service will become identical with the intuitive, internal mode. This also parallels the difference between the sacrificial offering and the incense offering. Understanding the difference explains the merit of Aaron's sons, who died bringing an uncommanded incense offering. Aaron's sons felt so unified with G-dliness that they automatically offered "incense," their very essence and being on the altar.

In the days of Moshiach, "the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the ocean bed." At the moment, it may be difficult to conceive how our perceptions will change in the times of Moshiach. We must realize, however, that the change will be only of perspective and priority. Currently, we connect to G-d volitionally: in thought, speech and action we attempt to fulfill G-d's commands. In the times of Moshiach, the connection will be innate and automatic: as a matter of course we will be aware of and fulfill G-d's Will, because the mitzvos will express not just the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people, but their unified essence.

These are not two approaches to serving G-d, or expressing our relationship with him. Rather, the volitional is an external mode of service, while the intuitive is an internal mode. Now, the external mode is dominant, except at certain times such as Yom Kippur. Now, we fulfill the commandments of the Creator, but as an individual, one with a separate identity. This is an exterior service, where the individual and the mitzvah – and thus the One who gave the mitzvah – remain separate and apart from each other.

But there is also an interior service. Here the mitzvah is fulfilled in such a way that the individual becomes attached to the Creator, adhering to Him so that they are like one entity. This will be the norm in the times of Moshiach. And this is what we experience, in part, on Yom Kippur.

Further, these two ways of serving the Creator, of performing the mitzvos, parallel the two types of offerings brought in the Temple. The sacrifices parallel the exterior service. They were performed on the outer altar. While they fulfilled a Divine command, they did not unite the individual with G-d in a complete union. The other type of offering was the incense. This was brought on the inner altar and parallels the individual's inner service. This offering with "inwardness of the heart" achieved a unity between the Creator and the Jewish people.

This week's Torah portion illustrates the nature of the external service, that of sacrifices, and the nature of the internal service, that of the incense. The Torah reading begins: "And the L-rd spoke unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they approached the L-rd and died." The word for "approach" also means to "come close" or "draw near." Their death was connected with an attempt to become closer to G-d.

From this perspective, their actions seem admirable. To actualize their attachment to G-d, they were willing to abandon this world. Their souls expired not because of a sin, but because of a great desire to experience G-dliness. And yet the Torah tells us elsewhere, in the portion of *Shemini*, that they died because they put incense in their fire pans and offered an unauthorized fire that G-d had not commanded them. This description clearly makes their act sinful. Yet here the opening verse, taken by itself, seems to describe an admirable approach.

So, did they die as transgressors, as a result of a sin, or as *tzaddikim*, as a result of their great attachment to G-d?

The narrative in *Shemini* actually supports the latter viewpoint. Moses explains to Aaron, “This is what L-rd said, that through those attached to Me I will be sanctified.” Since the incident occurred at the dedication of the Tabernacle, Moses obviously means that their death sanctified the Tabernacle. Their action of approaching G-d with an “unauthorized fire” must be viewed as exemplary, as the catalyst for the Tabernacle’s sanctification.

Accordingly, the statement that they offered “unauthorized fire that G-d had not commanded them” is not a criticism of Aaron’s sons, but the highest praise. They went “above and beyond” the limitations of the command. They literally devoted themselves to their desire for a revelation of G-d.

Thus the Torah emphasizes the type of service they performed: it was incense they intended to offer, because incense and their approach to G-d were mutually dependent. The degree of their attachment, manifested in an expiration of the soul, expressed itself in the offering of incense before G-d. As mentioned above, the incense altar was placed within the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle.

To elaborate: the outer altar had an effect on the external part of the person, namely, the thought, speech and action, which are described as the “garments” of the soul. Through the sacrifice on that altar, the person came to a full and proper fulfillment of the mitzvos in thought, speech and action.

But there is a deeper, more primal level of the soul. There, a person’s attachment to G-d comes through a revelation of the innermost aspect of the soul. Such a revelation automatically affects the thought, speech and action. Rather than observing the mitzvos because G-d commanded it, one does so naturally, fulfilling G-d’s Will as the intrinsic consequence of revelation. This is the offering of the incense altar.

Even the Hebrew words for “sacrifice” and “incense” allude to

the difference between an external and an inner offering, which they represent. The Hebrew word for "sacrifice" comes from the root "to approach," or "draw close." Notwithstanding a person's closeness to G-d, there still remains an individual, separate and apart, who performs the mitzvos. The word for "incense" comes from the root for "attachment" or "conjunction." At this level, one does more than approach G-d through thought, speech and action; one becomes united with G-d in essence.

Aaron's sons experienced an open revelation of the innermost aspect of their souls. At such a level, they did not need to be commanded to fulfill G-d's Will. They felt so unified with G-dliness that they automatically offered "incense," their very essence and being on the altar. Thus, what they offered was not commanded, because all their actions automatically and of themselves fulfilled G-d's Will.

But why did the incense offering and death of Aaron's sons sanctify the Tabernacle? And what is the connection between this incident at the beginning of the Torah reading and the priestly service of Yom Kippur, which follows?

As there are two levels of service within the human being, so there are two degrees of Holiness, two ways in which the Divine Presence manifests itself. In the first case, the Divine Presence occupies the Tabernacle, descending upon the children of Israel but remaining separate from them. In the second, the Divine Presence inhabits the Sanctuary, penetrating to the essence of the physical structure, making even the stones holy. The first, a mere occupation, parallels the external service, the sacrifices. In the second, there is an indwelling that penetrates to the very essence, paralleling the internal service, the incense offering.

Aaron, the high priest, was responsible for the sacrifices and bringing the Divine Presence upon the people. His sons went further, revealing the essence and uniting the soul with the Divine Presence.

And this is the nature of the service of Yom Kippur, to so elevate the soul and reveal its essence and unity with G-dliness, that one's Divine service occurs as an automatic consequence of the connection. This inner service is the highlight and focal point of Yom Kippur: on that day, the Kohen Gadol entered the holy of holies to perform – an incense offering. Yom Kippur is the day of atonement because at the level of incense, at the level of essence, the Jewish people are not a separate existence from G-d. Thus, there is no 'place' for sin nor weakness of the Divine connection.

This is the level of every Jew in the days of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 32:98-105)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. Chana (Carrie) bas Reb Meir ע"ה Greenberg
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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