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Explanations
on the
Yom Kippur
Avodah
according to
Chassidus



KOLLEL MENACHEM
LUBAVITCH

Explanations on the Yom Kippur Avodah according to Chassidus

Explanations on the inner dimension of the *Avodah* of the Kohen Gadol in the *Beis Hamikdash* on Yom Kippur, based on the teachings of Chabad Chassidus.

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When the holy Temple stood in Yerushalaim, the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur revolved around the Kohen Gadol and his service in the *Beis Hamikdash*. This *Avodah* was instructed to Moshe and Aharon in the Torah in *Parshas Acharei Mos*.

In the absence of the *Beis Hamikdash*, we no longer have the actual *Avodah* of the Kohen Gadol. We remember this *Avodah* in our prayers, describing it in detail in the Chazzan's repetition of Musaf. And we bemoan all that we have lost when 'we have no sanctuary... no incense and no sacrifices.'

Even though we have lost its physical observance, the inner dimension and soul of the Yom Kippur *Avodah* remains eternally.

Each Yom Kippur, all of the energies of the day are still manifest and our personal *Avodah* achieves everything that the Kohen Gadol's service would achieve; We can reach every level and draw down all of these *Hamshachos* into our souls and into our world.

On Yom Kippur, each one of us stands before Hashem as the Kohen Gadol, engaging in this inner *Avodah*. Each one of us enters the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* and offers the *Ketores*, as the essence of our *Neshama* is revealed and we connect to Hashem in oneness.

Like the Kohen Gadol, the most important aspect is how we bring it all home, to channel and translate our Yom Kippur experience into our daily lives throughout the year.

May we merit the immediate arrival of Moshiach and the restoration of the *Avodah* in its full glory, in the *Beis Hamikdash Hashelishi* *אמן בימינו*.

With blessings for a *גמר חתימה טובה*.

We would like to continue to expand this work. If you know of any other aspects of the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur discussed in the works of Chabad Chassidus or for feedback, please email us

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The Kohen Gadol

In the *Beis Hamikdash* on Yom Kippur, every part of the *Avodah* had to be performed by the Kohen Gadol.

Kohanim in general represent the *Sefirah* of *Chessed* (kindness). More specifically, this refers to the *Chessed* of *Atzilus*. This *Chessed* can be opposed or restricted by the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah* (severity or discipline).

The Kohen Gadol (literally the great Kohen) represents the level of *Rav Chessed* (literally abundant kindness), the sixth of the 'Thirteen Attributes of Mercy'. This is the level of *Chessed* of *Kesser* - Hashem's pure and absolute *Chessed*. This *Chessed* is unlimited. It cannot be opposed by any judgements and it does not depend on our actions or worthiness.

The *Avodah* of Yom Kippur reaches this level of *Rav Chessed*, the pure *Chessed* which atones for the sins of the Jewish people. This is the inner reason why the Yom Kippur *Avodah* had to be performed by the Kohen Gadol¹.

The Kohen Gadol must be married

The Torah says that on Yom Kippur the Kohen would atone "for himself and for *Beiso*"² *ביתו זו אשתו*³ ויכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו. Literally this means 'his house', but *Chaza*"I teach, that *"Beiso"* refers to his wife. From this we derive that to be eligible to do the Yom Kippur *Avodah*, the Kohen Gadol had to be married.

The female represents the *Sefirah* of *Malchus*, the feminine *Sefirah* which receives its G-dly light from higher levels and *Sefiros* above it. Usually *Malchus* receives its vitality via the more limited light of the emotional *Sefiros* (*Zeir Anpin*).

Yom Kippur is the culmination of a process known as *Aliyas Hamalchus* – the elevation of *Malchus*. This elevation begins on Rosh Hashona. On Yom Kippur *Malchus* is elevated to receive directly from the highest of all sources, the level of *Atik Yomin*, the inner dimension of *Kesser* which is the source of atonement.

Therefore, when doing the Yom Kippur *Avodah*, the Kohen Gadol – who represents the level of *Rav Chessed* of *Kesser* – had to be married. This represents the *Hamshacha* of this lofty level into the *Sefirah* of *Malchus*.

This is also why the Kohen Gadol would read from the Torah on Yom Kippur afternoon in the *Ezras Nashim*, the women's courtyard⁴ which also reflects the *Sefirah* of *Malchus*.

Seven days of separation

Before Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol had to be separated from his home for seven days. During these days he would live in the confines of the *Beis Hamikdash* and prepare for the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur. Consequently, Yom Kippur is the eighth day, coming after these seven days of preparation.

The number seven represents the order of *Seder Hishtalshelus*, the limited G-dly light that is connected to Creation. The number eight is not just an incremental step. It represents an infinite leap beyond *Seder Hishtalshelus* to a level of G-dliness that is unlimited; completely transcending the worlds and their creation.

This level of G-dliness will be revealed within the world in the times of Moshiach, which is also connected to the number eight. Unlike the harp that was used in the *Beis Hamikdash* which had seven strings, the harp in the era of Moshiach will have eight strings⁵.

The number eight is connected to *Teshuvah*, the *Avodah* of the day. Our sages ateach that *Teshuvah* brings *Refuah* (healing) to the world. *Refuah* is the eighth blessing in the *Shemoneh Esrei*⁶. This is because the *Avodah* of the *Baal Teshuvah* reaches the transcendent level of G-dliness represented by the number eight.

The number eight is also connected to the *Bris Milah* which takes place on the eighth day. When the Torah details the *Avodah* of the Kohen Gadol, it begins with the words “with this (*Zos*) *Aharon* will enter the *Kodesh*” *בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקודש*⁷. The Midrash teaches that the Kohen Gadol would enter the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* on Yom Kippur in the merit of the *Bris Milah* which was given with the word “*Zos*” – *זאת בריתי אשר תשמרו ביני וביניכם*⁸.

Seven days of separation

Another explanation why Yom Kippur is on the eighth day, coming after the Kohen Gadol's seven days of isolation;

The seven days correspond to the seven lower *Sefiros* of the world of *Atzilus*; *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod* and *Malchus*. The eighth day corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Binah* which is the source of these seven *Sefiros*.

Binah, which is referred to in Kabbalah as *Ima* – ‘the mother’ (of the *Sefiros*), is connected to *Teshuvah*. This idea is expressed in the *Parah Adumah*, which comes as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Our sages explain that the Red Heifer atones for the Golden Calf because; ‘let its (the calf's) mother (the Heifer) come and clean up her son's mess’.

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The Zohar teaches that on Yom Kippur the light of *Binah* shines. The inner dimension of *Kesser*, the source of atonement, is revealed within *Binah*⁹. Hence Yom Kippur is connected to the number eight.

White linen clothing

When performing the parts of the *Avodah* unique to Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol would wear four white linen garments; a turban, tunic, belt and pants. This is in contrast to his regular garments which were made of different coloured wools, linen and gold thread.

The word used in the Torah for linen is לב. The Gemara¹⁰ explains that לב means alone. Flax is different to other plants. Whereas one grain seed sprouts many stalks, one flax seed grows only one stalk. This represents the level of absolute oneness and unity of the essence of the *Neshama* – the *Yechidah* - which is one with Hashem's essence.

Chassidus distinguishes between the term אחד and יחיד. אחד whilst meaning one, still leaves room for the possibility of something else. יחיד on the other hand means the one and only, to the exclusion of anything else, representing a far deeper level of unity. This essential level of the *Neshama* – the *Yechidah* - is revealed within every Jew on Yom Kippur. This is the allusion of the linen clothing – לב.¹¹

This idea is also expressed by the colour white. White is an essential colour, representing absolute simplicity. Other colours or dyes are something additional which is added to the original surface. White is the essential state.

In the soul, the colours represent the different conscious levels or expressions of the *Neshama*. These are our intellectual and emotional qualities. White represents the essence of the *Neshama* itself.

Similarly, the various G-dly energies of the Sefiros correspond to different colours. However, the essential light of the *Or Ein Sof* which is revealed on Yom Kippur, is absolute simple pure essence as alluded to by the colour white¹².

White linen clothing – another explanation

The *Sefirah* of *Chessed* is depicted with the colour white. Linen however is associated with *Gevurah*¹³.

לב, the term used for the linen of the Kohen Gadol's clothing, has the *Gematria* of 6. *Gevurah* is the 6th *Sefirah* when the *Sefiros* are counted from above to below; *Kesser*,

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Chochma, Binah, Daas, Chessed, Gevurah. It is also the 6th Sefirah when counting the Sefiros from below to above; *Malchus, Yesod, Hod, Netzach, Tiferes, Gevurah*.

On Yom Kippur, even intentional sins are transformed into merits. The *Chessed* revealed on Yom Kippur is from the level of *Rav Chessed* (see above), which has the ability to transform and sweeten even the harshest of *Gevuros* that are reflected by linen.

The level of *Verav Chessed* which transforms the *Gevuros*, is the six of the 'Thirteen Attributes of Mercy' and it has the same *Gematria* as מנצפ"ך. These are the 5 letters of the Alef-Beis which have final letters and Kabbalistically they reflect the five aspects of *Gevurah*¹⁴.

The Goral - Lottery

One of the central parts of the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur was the two goats. Two male goats of similar appearance, size and monetary value would be brought into the *Azarah* and stood before the Kohen Gadol.

The Kohen Gadol would draw lots from a box in his two hands. One lot would designate one of the goats to be offered as a sacrifice to Hashem. The other would be sent *L'Azazel*, to be pushed off a mountain in the desert, carrying the sins of the Jewish people.

A lottery is only necessary when deciding between two equal things. When there is a difference between these things, the difference creates a logical reason for choice and a lottery is not necessary. The lottery is an arbitrary determination that determines one's choice. The lottery goes beyond logic.

Chassidus explains that in the paradigm of the G-dly light of Creation, there is a clear distinction between good and evil. This paradigm is described as 'logical' as it begins from the attribute of *Chochma*. This is the source of Torah and Mitzvos. In this 'order', if we fail in our observance of Torah, we create a deficiency and liability.

Whereas *Seder Hishtalshelus* originates from the Sefirah of *Chochma*, the lottery reaches levels of G-dliness completely beyond *Hishtalshelus* - the very essential light of Hashem that transcends logic. This is the level of G-dliness that is accessed on Yom Kippur. Because it transcends Torah and Mitzvos and the concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, it is able to affect atonement for our lackings in observance.

This is alluded to in the verse 'כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה' תטהרו, "for on this day He will affect atonement for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be cleansed before Hashem". 'לפני ה' can also mean 'beyond Hashem'.

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The name Hashem יהוה, coming from the terminology to bring into being, represents the G-dly light of Creation. As reflected in the lottery, on Yom Kippur we reach 'beyond' the name Hashem, bringing atonement from deepest levels of G-dliness.¹⁵

The two he-goats

Kelipah (literally a shell) refers to the forces of negativity which hide and conceal G-dliness. The Kabbalists divide the *Kelipos* into two groups; the *Shalosh Kelipos Hatemeios* and *Kelipas Nogah*.

The *Shalosh Kelipos Hatemeios* are the source of all things forbidden in the Torah which stand against Hashem's will. They are completely negative and cannot be elevated.

In contrast, *Kelipas Nogah* – literally a luminous shell, comprises both good and evil. This is the source of everything which is 'neutral'; neither expressly a Mitzvah or expressly forbidden. *Kelipas Nogah* can be elevated. The good element, the Divine spark within *Kelipas Nogah* becomes incorporated into the side of holiness and the evil aspect is cast down to the *Shalosh Kelipos Hatemeios*.

This process of purification and rectification is reflected in the *Avodah* of the two goats on Yom Kippur. The two goats had to come as a pair and had to be equal in size, appearance and value. One goat, represents the 'good' aspect of *Kelipas Nogah*. This goat is elevated as a sacrifice to Hashem. The other goat, represents the evil aspect of *Kelipas Nogah* which is sent out of the holy space of the *Beis Hamikdash* to *Azazel*¹⁶.

Atonement from the highest of levels

When the Kohen Gadol would recite *Vidui* (confession) over the Bull offering and the goat that was sent to *Azazel*, he would quote the Posuk *מכל אתכם לטהר עליכם יטהר אתכם* כי ביום הזה יטהר אתכם, "For on this day He shall affect atonement for you, to cleanse you from all of your sins. Before Hashem you shall be cleansed"¹⁷.

The Posuk does not explicitly say who will atone for the Jewish people's sins. Hashem is not referred to by any name. The Posuk simply says that "He shall affect atonement."

The names of Hashem refer to the way that He manifests Himself through the Divine energies of the *Sefiros*. The source of atonement on Yom Kippur comes from the essence of Hashem's being that transcends any names or descriptions. And so, the verse simply refers to Hashem as 'He'.

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Chassidus teaches that in addition to meaning 'before Hashem' i.e. in His presence, 'לפני ה' can also be understood to mean 'beyond' Hashem. The name י-ה-ו-ה is the holiest of Hashem's names. But it is still a name. The atonement that the Kohen Gadol invokes on Yom Kippur comes from Hashem's essence that is beyond any name¹⁸.

Sprinkling the blood in the Kodesh Hakodoshim

The Kohen Gadol would take the blood of the Bull sin-offering and the blood of the one he-goat into the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* where he would do a series of sprinklings. In the first *Beis Hamikdash*, the sprinkling was done between the poles of the Aron.

The Torah says that through this *Avodah* "he shall purge the Kodesh from the impurity of Bnei Yisrael and from their transgressions of the Israelites, for all of their sins" **וכפר על הקדש מטמאת בני ישראל ומפשעיהם לכל-חטאתם**.¹⁹

Our sins and failings in keeping Torah and Mitzvos blemish the level of 'Kodesh'. To make up for these lackings, we need to access levels of G-dliness which are beyond the levels of G-dliness affected by our sins.

Chassidus illustrates this with a parable of a river which has run dry. If you want to fill the river, you need to dig deep until you hit the source of the water, the subterranean spring. Once the source is accessed, the river fills automatically.

The *Avodah* of the Kohen Gadol took place in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, the deeper 'source' which is beyond the *Kodesh*. The blood was sprinkled between the poles of the *Aron* which contained the *Luchos*, the 'source' of all of the Mitzvos.

The Kohen Gadol draws down atonement from the level of *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, the deepest levels of G-dliness which are completely beyond Torah and Mitzvos. And through this, through the power of the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* "he will atone for the Kodesh (the levels which became blemished) from the sins of Bnei Yisrael".²⁰

Counting the sprinkling of blood

Whilst the Torah says that he would sprinkle seven sprinklings each time, our sages derive from the *Pesukim* that there had to be an additional sprinkling, for a total of eight.

When the Kohen Gadol sprinkled the blood, the first sprinkle would be made with an upwards motion. The following seven were made with a downward motion – **אחת למעלה – ושבע למטה**²¹.

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The Kohen counted the sprinklings in a unique way²²; 'אחת, אחת ואחת, אחת ושתיים וכו'' – “one, one and one, one and two... one and seven”, counting the ‘sprinkle above’ with each of the subsequent downward sprinkles. If he failed to count the upward sprinkle each time, according to one opinion in the Gemara he would not be *Yotzai*²³.

The additional upward sprinkle, *אחת למעלה*, is the level of eight, representing the level beyond *Seder Hishtalshelus* (see above). This refers either to the *Sefirah* of *Kesser* or the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, the source of the seven emotional *Sefiros*.

Counting the sprinklings in this unique manner is to draw down this lofty level (which is completely beyond *Hishtalshelus*) into each of the seven *Sefiros* of *Seder Hishtalshelus*.

In our personal *Avodah*, the *אחת למעלה* (literally one above) refers to the essence of the *Neshama* which is one with Hashem. This is the source of *Mesiras Nefesh*, absolute devotion to Hashem beyond all logic. This level, the *Yechidah*, is revealed on Yom Kippur. We need to then draw it down into our conscious dimensions and powers of the soul represented by the downwards sprinklings²⁴.

Seven before one; one before seven

As discussed above, Yom Kippur is the eighth day, coming after the seven days of separation and preparation. This is the level of eight which comes after and via seven.

In the sprinkling of blood in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, the eighth sprinkling - *Achas Lemaalah*, comes before the seven downward sprinkles. This is the level of eight which comes before seven.

The Rebbe explains; Whilst the number eight generally represents the G-dly light which transcends *Seder Hishtalshelus*, there are different levels within this light as well. The level alluded to by the eight that comes after seven, is the light which whilst beyond *Seder Hishtalshelus*, is still connected to *Seder Hishtalshelus* and therefore comes as a result of the prior *Avodah* within the framework of creation.

When the eight comes before the seven, this represents a level which is beyond *Seder Hishtalshelus* entirely. This is the level that is reached on the day of Yom Kippur through the *Avodah*²⁵.

And this is how he would count וכך היה מונה

When we recount the Seder of the *Avodah* in Musaf on Yom Kippur, we describe how the Kohen Gadol would count the sprinkles of blood. We begin מונה וכך היה מונה – ‘and this is how he would count’.

The word כך is spelled with two *Chofs*. The letter *Chof* alludes to the Sefirah of *Kesser*, which begins with the letter *Chof*. *Chof* also has the Gematria of 20. עשרים, the Hebrew word for 20, has the same Gematria as כתר – 620.

Kesser is the intermediary Sefirah between Hashem who creates the Sefiros (המאציל) and the Sefiros of *Atzilus* (הנאצלים). *Kesser* serves as the intermediary because it possesses elements of the two things that it unites.

These are the two dimensions of *Kesser*; the inner dimension which is part of the G-dly reality and the external dimension which is part of the created reality. The two *Chofs* of כך represent these two dimensions of *Kesser*.

The prophet says אנכי מוחה פשעיך, I (*Hashem*) erase your sins. When Hashem is referred to as ‘I’, it refers to Hashem’s essence which is beyond any of His names.

The atonement on Yom Kippur which erases our sins comes from this level of *Anochi* – I. The usual term for ‘I’ is אני. The difference between אנכי and אני is the letter כ. The two *Chofs* in the double usage of the word *Anochi* in the verse quoted above, are the two dimensions of *Kesser* which the Kohen Gadol reaches through his *Avodah*²⁶.

Incense in the Kodesh Hakodoshim

The most powerful part of the Yom Kippur *Avodah* was when the Kohen Gadol would enter the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* and offer *Ketores* (incense).

The word for *Ketores* is related to the word קטר, meaning a knot. This is in contrast to a *Korban* which comes from the word קרב, meaning close. *Korbanos* bring us closer to Hashem, but we remain separate. This refers to the outer expressions of the *Neshama*; our meditations, emotions and service of Torah and Mitzvos.

Ketores reflects and reveals the *Yechidah*, the essence of the *Neshama* which is implicitly bound in absolute oneness with Hashem.

This oneness is expressed in the *Ketores* that would be brought every day on the incense altar in the *Kodesh*. But it is more deeply expressed in the *Ketores* of Yom Kippur (the *Yechidah* in time) which was brought specifically by the Kohen Gadol (the *Yechidah* in man) in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* (the *Yechidah* in space)²⁷.

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Fragrance is something pleasing. The *Ketores* represents the spiritual pleasure generated through our essential bond with Hashem.

When our forefather Yaakov entered to receive the Brachos from his father, he disguised himself in the clothing of Eisav. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak smelled the fragrance of his clothing, ריח בגדיו. The fragrance of the *Ketores* that was brought daily in the *Kodesh* was this fragrance of ריח בגדיו, representing the perfect *Avodah* of Tzaddikim in their keeping of Torah and Mitzvos.

On this verse, our sages teach 'do not read the word as בגדיו – clothing, but rather as בוגדיו, His rebels'²⁸. This represents the fragrance and pleasure generated Above through the *Avodah* of *Baalei Teshuvah*, the rebels who return to Hashem in Teshuvah. The *Ketores* of Yom Kippur is this level of ריח בוגדיו, the fragrance of the rebels.

The *Avodah* of Tzaddikim, like the daily *Ketores*, only reaches the level of *Kodesh*. But the Baal Teshuvah reaches the essence and oneness with Hashem on the level of the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*.

On Yom Kippur the *Ketores* was the 'finest of the fine'

Ketores was offered twice each day in the Beis Hamikdash on the inner incense altar that stood in the *Kodesh*. The spices of the *Ketores* were crushed finely - דקה.

On Erev Yom Kippur, the spices were crushed again so that the *Ketores* that would be offered in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* would דקה מן הדקה 'the finest of the fine'.

According to Chassidus, the *Ketores* represents the refining of the *Kelipos* – the forces of negativity that conceal G-dliness. This is reflected in a number of aspects of the *Ketores*;

The 11 spices of the *Ketores* correspond to the 11 Crowns of Impurity of *Kelipah*. Further, unlike the *Korbanos*, the *Ketores* also included a non-Kosher ingredient - מור (musk) that became elevated as an offering to Hashem. One of the spices - the *Chelb'nah* - was also foul-smelling.

Throughout the year, we engage in the *Avodah* of *Birurim* – refining the *Kelipos* and the physicality of the world. On Yom Kippur, all of our *Avodah* of *Birurim* throughout the year goes through a further elevation and refinement to be 'the finest of the fine'.

The *Ketores* also reflects in the idea of *Teshuvah*, which is also the refinement of negativity. Throughout the year our *Teshuvah* is on the lower level of תשובה תתאה or 'Teshuvah out of fear'. Through this level of *Teshuvah*, our deliberate sins become refined to be like unintended sins – לזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות.

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On Yom Kippur, we reach the highest level of *Teshuvah* עילאה or 'Teshuvah out of love'. This level of *Teshuvah* has the power to affect an even greater refinement that transforms even our deliberate sins into merits - לזכות נעשה לו. ²⁹

The smoke from the incense

One of the ingredients that was added to the *Ketores* was a secret smoke-producing herb referred to as *Maaleh Ashan* – literally 'that raises up smoke'.

According to the Rambam³⁰, leaving this ingredient out of the *Ketores* on Yom Kippur was punishable by death. This punishment did not apply if the *Maaleh Ashan* was omitted during the rest of the year.

In *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed), the Rambam writes that the purpose of the *Ketores* was to remove bad odours from the slaughtering in the *Beis Hamikdash*. On a deeper level, the *Ketores* was to remove the 'smell' of negativity and impurity. This refers to the *Ketores* that was offered throughout the year.

On Yom Kippur, there is no Yetzer Hara or negativity that needs to be removed. The *Ketores* of Yom Kippur is about rising up to a higher and deeper level of connection to Hashem. This is the absolute devotion to Hashem that comes from revealing the essence of the *Neshama*.

As discussed above, the *Ketores* of the rest of the year and the *Ketores* of Yom Kippur represent two different levels of *Teshuvah*.

The *Ketores* of the rest of the year is like 'Teshuvah out of fear'. With this level of *Teshuvah* we can suppress negativity and 'remove its smell'. But we cannot transform it.

On Yom Kippur, our *Teshuvah* comes from the essence of the *Neshama*, 'Teshuvah out of love'. This level of *Teshuvah* has the power affect a complete transformation of negativity, elevating it to the loftiest of heights.

This power of elevation is alluded to in the *Maaleh Ashan* which was so integral to the Yom Kippur *Ketores*³¹.

Where to burn the incense

In the times of the Second *Beis Hamikdash*, a *Machlokes* raged between the Tzedokim (Sadducees) and the Chachamim about where the *Ketores* should be placed on the coals on Yom Kippur.

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The Tzedokim (who did not believe in the Oral Tradition) argued that the Kohen Gadol should place the *Ketores* on the coals outside in the *Kodesh*, before entering the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*. However, the Sages received an Oral Tradition that the *Ketores* had to be burned in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* itself³².

Needless to say, the Halacha follows the *Chachamim*. This matter was so important, that the Sages would place an oath upon the Kohen Gadol, to ensure that he would offer the *Ketores* in accordance with this Oral Tradition.

As discussed above, the *Ketores* represents the refining of the *Kelipos* – the forces of negativity that conceal G-dliness.

Spiritually, the perspective of the *Tzedokim* was that one should only be involved in the refinement of *Kelipah* when they are 'outside' and involved in mundane worldliness. When one is spiritually elevated to the level of the '*Kodesh Hakodoshim*', they should not involve themselves in lowly involvement within the world.

Like the view of the *Tzedokim*, this approach is completely invalid. The Halacha follows the view of the *Chachamim*. Burning the *Ketores* in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim* teaches us that even when we are on the highest spiritual levels, we still need to be aware that the ultimate purpose of our elevation is to 'bring it down' to impact and elevate the world.³³

Burning the Ketores slowly

Our Sages taught that the Kohen Gadol should not scatter the incense over the coal so that the smoke would rise quickly. Rather he should place the *Ketores* in a pile on top of the coals, so that the smoke will take a longer time to rise³⁴.

The *Ketores* (coming from the word קטר meaning a knot) represents the deep oneness between Hashem and the Jewish people. This union takes place in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*.

Chassidus and Kabbalah draw on the relationship between husband and wife as a metaphor for the relationship between Hashem and Jewish people.

Our sages teach "*When a woman gives seed first, she will give birth to a male. When a man gives seed first, she will give birth to a female*"³⁵.

The result of our deep connection to Hashem is the 'birth' of emotional experience – our feelings of love and awe for Him.

Our connection with Hashem can be initiated in one of two ways. It can be initiated 'from below to above' through our efforts in meaningful Avodah. It can also be aroused by a powerful G-dly revelation 'from above to below.'

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When our union with Hashem is initiated through our own *Avodah* (the 'woman'), it creates strong, deep and enduring emotions. This *Avodah* takes much time and effort in *Hisbonenus*, meditation on the greatness of Hashem.

It is 'quicker' and easier when the union comes from a direct revelation from Above (the 'Man'), but the emotions that this arouses within us will be weaker. This connection would be like scattering the coals so that the *Ketores* burned quickly.

The *Halacha* is that the Kohen Gadol had to pile the *Ketores* on the coals so that it would burn slowly. To be truly meaningful and lasting, the deep connection of Yom Kippur has to come through our own, slow and focused efforts.³⁶

No one else could be present

When the Kohen Gadol would do the *Avodah* in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, it says וכל אדם לא יהיה באהל מועד בבאו לכפר בקדש עד צאתו, "and no man could be in the *Ohel Moed* from when he came to atone for the *Kodesh* until he would leave"³⁷.

The Talmud Yerushalmi³⁸ teaches that this refers also to the angels who are described as having faces in the image of the face of man. Even the loftiest angels could not be present in the *Beis Hamikdash* at this time.

At this time, Hashem's very essence, which completely transcends creation, is revealed. This level is completely beyond the angels who, despite being spiritual beings, are still part of the created reality. In face of this revelation, they cannot exist, let alone be present.

But at this time, the essence of the *Neshama* is revealed. The essence of the *Neshama* is a part of and remains one with Hashem's essence. The *Avodah* of Yom Kippur reveals a state of absolute oneness with Hashem and the Jewish people, to the exclusion of everything else, ישראל ומלכא בלחודוהי, 'the Jewish people and the King, alone together'³⁹.

This is the experience of *Neilah*. When the gates close, all of the created reality is locked out and we experience the most private and intimate relationship with Hashem⁴⁰.

No man could be present

When the Kohen Gadol would do the *Avodah* in the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, it says וכל אדם לא יהיה באהל מועד בבאו לכפר בקדש עד צאתו, "and no man could be in the *Ohel Moed* from when he came to atone for the *Kodesh* until he would leave"⁴¹.

On this verse, the Midrash asks 'but isn't the Kohen Gadol himself a man?'

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This Posuk could also be read as "*and every man will be לא (not) when he is in the Ohel Moed when he comes...*"

The level of אדם (man) refers to the conscious levels and expressions of the *Neshama* which begins with our intellectual qualities. The level of לא אדם (literally not a man) refers to the super-conscious essence of the *Neshama*. The essence of the *Neshama* has a powerful desire for Hashem that transcends and runs deeper than logic and reason (רעותא (דליבא).

On Yom Kippur⁴² when the Kohen Gadol would enter the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, the essence of his *Neshama* and its deep desire for G-dliness was revealed. And so, in truth the Kohen Gadol was לא אדם.

Returning home

The Mishna⁴³ teaches that after completing the Yom Kippur *Avodah*, the people would escort Kohen Gadol back to his home. He would make a festive meal for his friends to celebrate that he emerged in peace from the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*.

The *Avodah* of Yom Kippur began with separation from the world, with the Kohen Gadol leaving his home to be isolated in the *Beis Hamikdash*. When the Kohen Gadol performed the *Avodah*, especially when he would enter the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, he would be completely beyond the world.

But Hashem's ultimate intent is not that we separate ourselves from the world. The purpose of spiritual elevation is not to remain outer-worldly, but to draw that holiness back into the world afterwards.

And so, after climbing to the loftiest heights during the *Avodah*, the Kohen Gadol would return immediately home. The home represents our mundane, day-to-day involvements within the world. Brining these revelations back home to permeate and infuse our daily lives, is the true culmination of Yom Kippur⁴⁴.

References

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- ¹ Ateres Rosh. Likutei Levi Yitzchak Igros p389
- ² Vaykira 16:6
- ³ Mishna Yoma 1:1
- ⁴ Likutei Levi Yitzchak Igros p412
- ⁵ Arachin 13b
- ⁶ Maamer Vchol Adam 5723.
- ⁷ Vayikra 16:3
- ⁸ Breishis 17:10
- ⁹ Tzemach Tzedek Or Hatorah Yom Kippur p825
- ¹⁰ Zevachim 18b. Rashi.
- ¹¹ Likutei Torah Vayikra 28b. Ateres Rosh
- ¹² ibid
- ¹³ Linen is a coarse fabric, representing Gevurah. This is in contrast to soft wool which reflects the Sefirah of Chesed. This is the Kabbalistic reason why we are forbidden to mix wool and linen together.
- ¹⁴ Likutei Levi Yitzchak Igros p389
- ¹⁵ Maamer Al Ken Karu Leyamim Haeilu Purim 5713
- ¹⁶ Tzemach Tzedek Or Hatorah Parshas Acharei Mos p82
- ¹⁷ Vayikra 16:30
- ¹⁸ Likutei Torah Acharei Mos
- ¹⁹ Vayikra 16:16
- ²⁰ Tzemach Tzedek Or Hatorah Shabbos Shuva p 2121
- ²¹ Mishna Yoma 5:3
- ²² Mishna Yoma 5:4
- ²³ Yoma 55a
- ²⁴ Tzemach Tzedek Yahal Or Tehillim p102
- ²⁵ Maamer Vechol Adam 5723
- ²⁶ Tzemach Tzedek Yahal Or Tehillim chapter 27
- ²⁷ Sefer Hasichos 5752 Parshas Tetzaveh
- ²⁸ Sanhedrin 37
- ²⁹ See Sefer Hasichos 5736 15th of Av and 5739 14th of Kislev
- ³⁰ Hilchos Avodas Yom Hakipurim 5:25
- ³¹ Likutei Sichos Volume 14 Parshas Vayeilech 1
- ³² Yoma 19b, 53a
- ³³ Toras Menachem Volume 24 p 398
- ³⁴ Yoma 49b
- ³⁵ Niddah 31a
- ³⁶ Or Hatorah Vayikra 1 page 284
- ³⁷ Vayikra 16:17

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³⁸ Yoma 1:5

³⁹ Zohar Volume 3 22:2

⁴⁰ Maamer Vechol Adam 5723

⁴¹ Vayikra 16:17

⁴² Sefer Hamaamrim 5679 Acharei Mos

⁴³ Yoma 7:4

⁴⁴ Likutei Sichos Volume 32 Parshas Acharei