

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS VAYIKRA**

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - VAYIKRA

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE ESSAYS ON PARSHAS VAYIKRA

**Published by the
Jewish Discovery Center
Institute for Jewish Studies**

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**Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who,
more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us
for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption**

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Vayikra* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

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In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

Parshas Vayikra is about G-d's loving and endearing calling to Moses. In times of exile G-d's calling to us frequently to be cold and detached. And in the time of Geulah we will all see the true love G-d always had for us.

ESSAY ONE

BRING A KORBAN, NOT A SACRIFICE!

Sacrifice entails losing something for a bigger gain.

The ideal is to get close to G-d and in the process bring toher things closer as well.

ESSAY ONE

BRING A KORBAN, NOT A SACRIFICE!

Vayikra: The Book of Affection

The third and central book of the Torah, Vayikra, is named after the opening word of the book, which translates as “and He called.” At first glance, it is strange that the name of a book—the central book—should be so ordinary. All this word seems to be saying is that G-d called Moses before speaking to him. What is so significant about G-d calling Moses?

Rashi explains that G-d calling of Moses was a sign of the affection He had for Moses. Accordingly, “Vayikra” reflects the love G-d has for Moses, and by extension, his people—the Jewish people.

What is the central theme of Vayikra? Korbonot, which we usually translate as sacrifices. That these laws are prefaced by the

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word Vayikra that connotes affection compels us to conclude that the sacrifices were expressions of G-d's love for us.

Now the question is why is the offering of sacrifices an expression of love and affection?

An Exercise in Translation

One answer lies in the true translation of the Hebrew word Korban, which is "closeness" rather than sacrifice. The korban was G-d's way of letting us get close to Him. And indeed, there is no greater sign of affection for another than allowing that person to get close to us.

This is especially true with regard to getting close to G-d who is Infinite. How can a finite being get close to an Infinite G-d? The answer is that it is impossible. However, G-d, just as He transcends the finite world, so too does He transcend the limits of the infinite.

What motivates G-d to transcend the parameters of both the finite and the infinite? It is His love for the Jewish people. The Talmud coins an expression "*Ahava docheket et ha'basar*,"

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that love can compress the flesh and overcome the limitations of space that two people occupy. Similarly, G-d's love for us allows the diametrically opposite realms of the infinite and the finite to meet.

One may still ask a question: granted that the Korban is not just a sacrifice but rather G-d's way of demonstrating His love for us; that He allows and enables us to get close to Him. But why do we have to offer animal sacrifices? And why do we pray for the restoration of the sacrificial order in the future Temple?

There is a two part answer to this question:

The Proof of True Love

First, our offering a Korban involves seeking to do fulfill G-d's will. It is the ultimate expression of our love and desire to get close to another when we do what the other wants even if we fail to understand why they want it and what is in it for ourselves. If we only give someone that we love a gift that we appreciate, then we are not expressing true love. Only when we give them what they want regardless of how we feel

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does it represent a true gesture of unconditional love.

Second, we must reiterate that a korban is not really a sacrifice. And this is not just a matter of semantics. A sacrifice implies destroying one thing to preserve something else that we deem more important. A korban, by contrast, represents preserving the original, albeit in a different and higher form.

If we think about it every physical object we use can either be a sacrifice or a korban. For example, when we eat any piece of food—meat or vegetable—we can view it as the destruction of its original beauty and form for the greater good. That would mean that we sacrificed an apple because we deem our nutritional needs to be more important than leaving the apple the way G-d made it without our intervention.

There is a more accurate way of looking at the consumption of that apple. The apple has now been converted into human energy and all of the benefits that ensue from human ingenuity that were nourished by the consumption of that apple. In that scenario, the apple is not destroyed and thus sacrificed for a greater good;

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rather the apple is now transformed into a higher life form and has assumed a new and more sublime identity.

The korban we offered in the Beit Hamikdash involved a representation of every form of existence. It required salt a mineral, flour, oil and wine—vegetation, an animal and a Kohain, a human being. These four aspects of creation offered in the Temple represented all the inanimate, vegetative, animal and human forms. When the Kohain offered this korban he was in effect taking all of existence and elevating it to the level of the Divine. Nothing was sacrificed. Everything was elevated.

Maturity: Sacrifice or Growth?

Perhaps an analogy from the human maturation process will be helpful to put the korban concept into perspective that will also help us come to grips with the way life will be in the future Messianic Era.

When a child grows and develops into an adolescent and then an adult they do not sacrifice their childhood so that they can become adults. If a child was to sacrifice his or

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her childhood and compelled to mature overnight into a full-fledged adult it would be traumatic, daunting and overwhelming. Rather, a child takes his or her childhood identity and elevates it into a higher form of life. So that while the child remains in the adult personality, it is now a child that is elevated and absorbed within the more sophisticated state of adulthood.

The Entire World a Korban

The ultimate manifestation of the korban ideal will be realized in the Messianic Age. First, the Temple offerings will be reinstated as the Torah states and we make reference to it countless times in our liturgy. Second, all of existence will undergo the process of korban-elevation, not sacrifice.

Many people fear the unknown and particularly the Messianic Age when we imagine the drastic changes that will occur. Will we recognize ourselves and the world around us?

The answer is that the changes that will occur will not destroy or negate anything that exists in the present that is positive. Gradually and

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seamlessly we will grow and take our present state of mind into higher and more delightful state—the ultimate korban!

ESSAY TWO

SENSITIVITY

Being sensitive is always right.

**It is even more crucial when our goal is to
acquire sensitivity.**

**One must be sensitive in the pursuit of
sensitivity!**

ESSAY TWO

SENSITIVITY

No Sacrifices

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) devotes much of its content to the laws of Korbanos, usually translated as “sacrifices,” but more a more accurate translation could be either “offerings” or “agents of closeness.”

However there is a fundamental difference between these two translations:

A sacrifice connotes that we are allowing one thing to be destroyed and “sacrificed” for another. This implies that certain things are dispensable. A soldier who dies in battle makes a sacrifice for his country. We are willing to give one life to save many lives. We do things that consume our time, energy, and resources for a desired end. We view that as a necessary sacrifice for a better outcome.

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A korban suggests an entirely opposite message. We are not declaring that an animal's life is dispensable, but rather that the animal is fulfilling the ultimate purpose for which it was created, and thereby it, along with the person who brings the offering—and by extension the entire physical universe—gets closer to G-d. It is thus the very antithesis of a sacrifice where the object or person sacrificed is denied the benefits that will be enjoyed by the one for whom the sacrifice is made.

Proper Syntax

With this brief exercise in translation we can understand the deeper meaning of a statement made in the Talmud with respect to the way in which one designates a korban. One could theoretically do it in two ways: one can say that a certain animal shall be dedicated “to G-d as a korban,” or “a korban to G-d.” While it is only a minor difference in syntax, the Talmud (Nedarim 10b) makes a big deal of it. One should not use the first formula “to G-d as a korban” but rather one should say “a korban to G-d.” The reason for this is that if one would

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say G-d's name first and neglect to finish his sentence he would have said G-d's name in vain. Therefore one must first declare that it is a korban and then mention that it is dedicated to G-d. Some commentators explain that the fear is that they may change their mind and decide against the offering or that they may die before completing the sentence.

A first glance this concern appears to be a trivial one and farfetched. What are the odds that a person in robust health who is designating an animal as his sacrifice will die before finishing his declaration?

Three explanations can be given for what might seem to be an exaggerated concern:

A Stable World...

The simple answer is that saying G-d's name in vain is so serious a transgression—it is the third of the Ten Commandments—that one must go to extremes to avoid any, even, remote possibility of transgressing it. Our Sages (Shavuos 39a) tell us that when G-d uttered the third commandment “Do not bear My name in vain” the entire world trembled. G-d's name is

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the vivifying force within creation. When that name is compromised the entire foundation of the world's existence is shaken.

This ties in directly to the idea of a korban. A korban is said to be the agent which brings us closer to G-d, but it simultaneously also brings G-d closer to us. Just like the food we eat helps to keep the soul from leaving our bodies, so too, a korban, "G-d's bread," as it were, is the spiritual food which keeps G-d's vitalizing force within creation.

A korban and respect for G-d's name have the same objective: keeping G-d within this world and thereby maintaining a stable world.

Thus to be respectful to G-d's name is to appreciate the role of G-d as our Creator and Sustainer so that the korban can achieve its intended objective, especially bringing G-d closer to us.

...or a World that is a Stable?

On a somewhat deeper level we can explain the reason for the extreme caution in not saying G-

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d's name before the word "korban" in the following way:

A korban is usually brought for an unintentional transgression. It suggests that the person lacks a certain measure of sensitivity to spiritual matters. An intentional breach of the law can be a onetime and uncharacteristic eruption of one's evil impulse. An unintentional violation implies that one just gravitates towards transgression, not even realizing that he or she has done something wrong. It points to a coarse and rather unrefined animal soul that covers the natural sensitivity of the G-dly soul. The person realizes that his animal soul has taken over.

To rectify this situation one is required to bring an animal offering to indicate that the cause of one's transgression is the uncouth nature of the animal soul that has been allowed to grow and dominate at the expense of the G-dly soul's spiritual nature. And even when one did not transgress and brings a voluntary korban to G-d, the fact that it generally involves the offering of an animal indicates that this korban, too, is about refining our animal nature so that we can get closer to G-d.

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It follows then that when this individual is in need of a korban to become re-sensitized, it is crucial that this person goes out of his or her way to show sensitivity to G-d by avoiding any, even the slightest, most remote and unwitting possibility of showing disrespect to Him by uttering His name in vain. This reversal of the syntax is in and of itself part of the atonement process that helps bring the person closer to G-d. Thus, by showing such acute sensitivity it helps to make the korban process much more effective in bringing us closer to G-d.

G-d is Not an Abstraction...

One can offer a third, an allegorical, explanation for this extreme approach to not mentioning G-d's name first lest the person will have a change of heart or die before uttering the word "korban".

When a person says, "To G-d a korban," he is referring to G-d as something in the distance, an abstraction. When G-d is viewed as an abstraction there is a significant possibility that the person will have a change of heart or "die," in the figurative sense of the word. "Dying," the

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Zohar states, is a metaphor for one who falls to a lower level. And once one degenerates he might never be able to conclude with the word "korban/closeness". This means that he will find it difficult to recognize his potential to get close to G-d. How can one get close to an abstract and remote Being? His distancing of G-d becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and undermines the efficacy of the korban.

The proper approach is to say the word "korban" first. This means that at the outset one recognizes that he or she has the ability to get close. This means that G-d is accessible and His Torah and Mitzvot are accessible, as the Torah declares, "This thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart to observe it." Once that premise has been established there is no obstacle that can prevent us from getting close to G-d.

...Neither is Moshiach and Redemption

One of the salient distinctions between the period of Galus/exile and Geulah/Redemption is sensitivity.

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From the time the Beis Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, was destroyed and the period of Galus/exile commenced we have been collectively and individually desensitized. We have lost touch with our inner soul and find ourselves at a distance from G-d. Our challenge now is to find our way back.

Tragically until Moshiach comes and rebuilds the Beis Hamikdash we can no longer rectify this situation by way of the literal korban. But we do have substitutes such as Torah study and prayer. Every time we study the laws of the Beis Hamikdash and the korban offerings therein, it is as if we are bringing that offering.

However the virtual offering of our studying does not suffice. We must also avoid the danger of mentioning G-d's name before we mention the word "korban".

How does that translate into our own lives?

First, we must study the parts of Torah that discuss G-d's name, i.e., His attributes and what connects Him to our world. This includes the teachings of Chassidus which focus on a better understanding of G-d's name that leads to a more sophisticated understanding of G-d, an

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understanding that will prevent us from trivializing Him.

Second, we must instill in our virtual korban a healthy dose of sensitivity. For that, Torah study is also the answer, for Torah helps to fashion our way of thinking. Study of the parts of Torah that deal with the Beis Hamikdash, and Redemption specifically, help to open our minds to a Higher reality and also condition us to feel comfortable with that Higher reality. Becoming sensitive is already the first step in experiencing the energies of Moshiach and Redemption, the period that is characterized as the ultimate time of our spiritual awareness.

Third, we must also augment our Torah study with ardent and urgent prayers for Redemption. We cannot lull ourselves into thinking that the Redemption is far off and that it is an elusive goal. That is tantamount to the one who places G-d on a “pedestal” and maintains that He is beyond our reach. We must approach our requests for Moshiach and Redemption as requests for things that are within range, nay, that they are right outside our doorway standing on the threshold. Moshiach and Redemption are within our grasp. Our prayers

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to G-d for Redemption must therefore reflect the following sentiment, "We are so close; reveal Moshiach now!"

ESSAY THREE

HAVE YOU BROUGHT A KORBAN RECENTLY?

A sacrifice is a three pronged process:

A paradigm shift, emotional attachment to G-d and living
that way.

ESSAY THREE

HAVE YOU BROUGHT A KORBAN RECENTLY?

Anatomy of Gematria

Gematria is the term used in rabbinic literature that translates roughly as numerology. In Torah interpretation, Gematria is a legitimate and serious method of establishing connections between words and concepts and is even employed by the Talmud in matters of Jewish law.

Thus, when we see the numerical equivalency of two apparently unrelated words, it is an indication that on some level there is a thematic connection between them. The field of gematria is not a free-for-all, where anyone can find the numerical equivalency between two words and draw unwarranted conclusions. However, when we already know the connections between words and concepts, the method of Gematria helps to buttress and flavor that knowledge.

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In this week's parsha, Vayikra, the Torah discusses the various offerings one would bring to the Beis Hamikdash - the Holy Temple. In the opening paragraph the Torah states:

“When a person among you brings an offering to G-d, you should bring your offering from animals—from cattle, or from flocks.”

The Chassidic work, *Zera Baruch* discovers that the two key Hebrew words of this verse—“*korban lashsem*—an offering to G-d”—have the numerical value of 408. That is also the numerical value of the three Hebrew words “*tzom* (a fast), *kol* (voice) and *mammon* (money).” These three terms can be found in our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy above the corresponding words: “*teshuvah* (repentance or return), *tefilah* (prayer) and *tzedakah* (charity).

For one's repentance and return to the right path to be complete one is required to fast on Yom Kippur. Raising our voices in prayer, petitioning G-d to forgive us, is indispensable to getting close to Him. Sharing our money with the needy—giving charity—is crucial in getting

G-d to be charitable towards us and erases any negative decrees against us that may have resulted from our errant behavior and that may have caused us to become distant from him.

The Art of Getting Close

On the surface, the connection between these three elements, Teshuvah, Tefilah and Tzedakah, and the idea of bringing an offering to G-d is quite clear. To come close to G-d—which is the true meaning of the word for sacrifice or offering in Hebrew (*korban*)—one must do Teshuvah, pray and give Tzedakah. These three are crucial components of the process of getting close to G-d.

Teshuvah involves self-transformation. If one's current disposition is antithetical to G-d, Teshuvah (which involves remorse for the past and resolve for the future) allows us to shed that negative past.

However, Teshuvah alone will not suffice. A person has to make a conscious effort to get close to G-d and cannot rely on the fact that he or she has an altered personality. So if Teshuvah removes an impediment to getting

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close to G-d, Tefilah constitutes the actual process of getting close.

On a deeper level, Teshuvah too is an important part of the process of getting close to G-d, just as the word Teshuvah – return – implies. Teshuvah is not merely removal of an impediment; it is also a movement in the right direction.

Tefilah goes beyond that. The word tefilah is related to the Hebrew word for attachment. Whereas Teshuvah leads us on the right path and brings us closer to G-d, Tefilah is the end result of becoming attached to and bonding with Him.

Tzedakah, the “Clincher”

What then, we may ask, is the role of Tzedakah in the process of getting close to G-d? If we have removed the impediments and are now in a state of attachment to G-d, what role does Tzedakah play? The question is not why it is important to give Tzedakah. Rather, why is giving Tzedakah the third, and presumably the ultimate, step in bringing our korban?

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One answer is that Tzedakah represents the most tangible expression of moving away from ourselves and our self-interest. Tzedakah involves taking our hard earned money and giving it to someone else.

Our spiritual emotions notwithstanding, without Tzedakah, there is no guarantee that our return and attachment to G-d is real. Even if it is genuine, there is no guarantee that the attachment will be sustained. Since we are essentially physical beings and creatures of habit, the way to ensure that our korban is genuine and sustainable we must engage in acts of Tzedakah.

The Keys to Redemption

We can now understand why our Talmudic Sages stated, “Israel will only be redeemed with Tzedakah.” The simple understanding of this statement is that G-d rewards us “measure for measure.” If we give Tzedakah to those who are in need, G-d reciprocates and performs the ultimate act of Tzedakah by taking us out of exile, with all of its impoverishing features.

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In light of our previous analysis, there is an even more profound way of understanding the link between Tzedakah and Redemption.

Exile is not just a geographic term. It is a description of how distant we have become from G-d. Exile is the antithesis of korban. Redemption is when we enjoy a complete return to G-d. It is no wonder then that the word “korbano - his offering” that appears several times in the beginning of this week’s parsha has the same gematria value as Moshiach.

We bring about this collective korban by way of these three elements of Teshuvah, Tefilah and Tzedakah.

Parallel between Animal, Cattle and Flocks and Teshuvah Tefilah and Tzedakah

Now that we’ve established the connection between Teshuvah, Tefilah and Tzedakah on the one hand and a korban on the other, we can explore the connection in even greater detail.

In this verse, the Torah speaks of the korban coming from: “animals—from cattle, or from

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flocks.” It may be suggested that the three elements of Teshuvah, Tefilah and Tzedakah parallel the three items, animal, cattle and flocks.

The “animal” to which this verse refers is not just the physical animal that was sacrificed. Chassidic literature understands the animal as a reference to the animal soul within us. It is this animal nature that stands in the way of our being able to get close to G-d.

The antidote to the animal soul is fasting. Fasting should not be understood to mean exclusively desisting from eating. It includes all forms of suppressing our animal drives; but most significantly, it requires us to alter the animalistic way of thinking. This is what Teshuvah entails. Teshuvah involves a complete paradigm shift. Instead of thinking like an animal we must think like humans created in G-d’s own image.

We are Only Human?

We often dismiss our inadequacies by saying “we are only human.” On the contrary, if we had acted the way our distinct human character

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dictates, we would not have fallen short of the mark. If we wanted to be more precise, we would say that it is the animal in us that causes us to act contrary to our humanity.

At any rate, to bring our korban we must change our animal way of viewing things. An animal will step on a rock, a one hundred dollar bill or a baby without making a distinction between them. An animal does not see beneath the surface. Our first challenge in bringing our own personal korban, and the collective korban of the Redemption, is to see things through our open human eyes.

Messaging the Heart

The second reference in the verse is to “cattle.” The term cattle, generally, is used to represent the aggressive individual. He or she is filled with rage and, like the proverbial bull in a china shop, and steps and stomps his way through life. This is the person whose animalistic energy and passion can be channeled into holiness. That is the function of the voice of prayer. Prayer is the medium through which we vent our emotions and stir our passion to G-d.

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Tefilah, we are told, is a time of battle. The G-dly soul combats the aggression and passion of the animal soul. Tefilah focuses on the greatness of G-d and is designed to excite the soul.

So, while the Teshuvah component of the korban creates a paradigm shift, changing the way we think, Tefilah works to massage the heart.

The third ingredient for getting us closer to G-d and our Redemption is the final item in this verse, which is “flocks.” This term refers specifically to flocks of sheep, a timid and meek animal, and suggests the tamed, but hedonistic, animal soul. There is no aggression or passion here, just calm indulgence in the material world.

Tzedakah is the counterforce to the aspect of the animal soul that stands in the way of our return to G-d. Tzedakah involves taking our hard earned money, with which we could indulge the physical and material pleasures of the world even more, and giving it away.

The Three Powers of Royalty

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The title accorded to Moshiach is Melech – King. The word Melech is said to be an acronym for *mo'ach* (brain), *lev* (heart) and *ca'ved* (liver). These three parts of the human anatomy parallel the three areas that we must tackle to bring about our total return to G-d, which after all is the function of Moshiach.

First, Moshiach masters the mind. He possesses the most spiritually sophisticated approach to life. He sees things with open eyes. Second, Moshiach has the greatest passion for G-d and for His people and suffers every moment that G-d and the Jewish people are in exile. Third, Moshiach is one who has conquered his material desires (represented by the liver which is filled with blood, symbolizing physical pleasure). He has transformed his desire for the physical and for pleasure into the joy and bliss of spiritual delight.

To bring our personal and collective korban we must each incorporate into ourselves these three elements: Teshuvah (paradigm shift), Tefilah (stirring our passion) and Tzedakah (transforming our selfish and hedonistic desires into selfless acts of kindness).

ESSAY FOUR

OPEN THE DOORS OF YOUR SANCTUARY!

It is axiomatic that when we are engaged in routine behavior we must look into our soul for guidance.

The truth is that even when we are engaged in purely spiritual activity we must also probe beneath the surface to ensure that our spirituality is genuine.

ESSAY FOUR

OPEN THE DOORS OF YOUR SANCTUARY!

Dispute Between Rashi and Tosphos

One of the offerings in the Temple, discussed in this week's parsha, is the *Shelamim* or Peace Offering. These sacrifices were offered in the Temple courtyard, where the Altar was situated. One of the requirements for this type of offering was first to open the doors of the Sanctuary.

There is a dispute between Rashi and Tosphos (French Sages who lived between the 12th and 14th centuries) whether this requirement applies to sacrifices other than a peace offering. According to Rashi it does not. But according to the Tosafists it applies to all sacrifices.

Although we do not have the Beis Hamikdash or the offering of sacrifices in the present day and age (even as we pray incessantly for it to be restored), nevertheless every detail of Torah

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must provide us with insight into our own service to G-d.

We therefore have to understand:

(a) Why does the Temple Sanctuary door have to be open before one brings the Peace Offering?

(b) Why does Rashi maintain that it only applies to the Peace Offering? What is unique about the Peace Offering?

(c) Why do the Tosafists disagree with Rashi on this matter and extend the requirement of opening the doors of the Sanctuary to all sacrifices?

The Peace Offering Dynamic

To answer these questions we must first understand the dynamic of a Peace Offering. It was so labeled because it was divided into three parts. One part of it was offered to G-d on the Altar; another part was given to the Kohanim-Priests to consume and the third part was eaten by the person whose sacrifice it was.

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The fact that G-d, the Kohain and the owner each had a share in this offering was a symbol of peace and harmony.

However, peace and harmony are achievable only when the doors of the Sanctuary are open. This means that peace must be informed by our inner Sanctuary. If peace were to come from external influences, such as from the philosophical, political and social arenas, it would be flawed because that kind of peace is artificial and specious.

Peace is G-d's domain. One of the names associated with G-d is Shalom. One of our daily prayers is *Sim Shalom*, in which we ask G-d to bring Shalom. We also refer to G-d as the "One who makes peace in the heavens" and we then petition Him to "make peace upon us and upon all of Israel."

One could ask, why do we have to ask G-d to bring Shalom? Shouldn't two people involved in a squabble find ways of resolving their differences without G-d intervening?

Furthermore, by referring to G-d's celestial peace-making venture with the angels as a rationale for His making peace down here it

suggests that if He can make peace above he can certainly make peace below. Why would we think that it is easier to make peace below?

Heavenly Peace

The answer is that while it is indeed permissible to make every and any effort at procuring peace through whichever legal means are available to us, the only type of peace that is genuine and enduring is one based on the ultimate truth that emerges from the Holiest place on Earth—the Beis Hamikdash.

To elaborate:

When there is division between two parties, especially when the division runs deep, the ability human institutions and techniques possess to bring peace involves glossing over the differences or even the use of deception. In modern times we refer to these approaches as diplomacy. In the long run diplomacy proves ineffective because the two parties' differences flare up again, inasmuch as they were not really resolved, or the deception is ultimately exposed and the divisions become deeper than ever.

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To secure true and enduring peace we must be exposed to the inner sanctum of our hearts and soul, which is connected to G-d. The overarching power of the Divine is capable of making peace even in the heavens, where the differences between the two archangels Michael and Gabriel are apparently irreconcilable. The archangel Michael stands for pure unmitigated kindness and love whereas the archangel Gabriel represents the trait of unadulterated judgment. Only G-d can fuse these two disparate forces into one amalgam, dedicated to the one G-d. If G-d can fuse the two diametrically opposite traits of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, then there can be no doubt that He can unify two people whose differences are not so profound.

One of the salient differences between angels and humans is that angels are mono-directional. They are programmed beings and without capacity to emote in ways other than their monolithic nature. Humans were created as complex, multi-dimensional creatures. Even if one trait is dominant, other and even opposing traits can be found close to the surface.

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Thus, if G-d can create a peace that allows diametrically opposite angelic creatures to be at peace with each other in G-d's overarching presence, He can certainly bring disparate people together. Humans already have commonality in terms of their external personalities. G-d's presence in our lives helps us to find that commonality.

Moreover, and more importantly, when we are in touch with the inner sanctum of our soul we discover that there is truly one source and one father to all of us. As explained in Tanya at Chapter 32 (32 is the numerical equivalent of the word *lev*-heart and thus this chapter has been called the "heart of the Tanya" with its emphasis on *Ahavas Yisroel*—the Love for one's fellow Jew), when we allow our spiritual dimension to dominate it leads to fulfillment of the Mitzvah to "love your fellow as yourself." This is so as, from the vantage point of our soul, we come to realize that the other is yourself.

We can now understand why, according to Rashi, this requirement of opening the doors of the Sanctuary is restricted to the Peace Offering. Such an offering is prompted by a

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daunting challenge and we desperately need the assistance that comes from our inner sanctum.

As stated, Rashi does not consider this a requirement for an *Olah*-burnt offering, which must be burnt on the Altar. Neither the Kohain nor the one who brought the offering partakes of it; it is to be totally consumed on the fire of the Altar.

The *Olah* sacrifice consequently expresses one's total devotion to G-d; totally spiritual, consumed with the fire and passion for G-d. This individual needs no reminder of the G-dly element in the sacrifice. One does not need to open the door to the inner sanctum because the energy that comes from within is already evident in the person's surrender of his or her entire being to G-d, exclusively.

Balancing Between Advancing and Retreating

Tosphos, however, extends this requirement to all other sacrifices. In his view, even though a person may exhibit unmitigated passion for G-d, there is a lingering concern that there might be a hidden agenda. It might even be a spiritual ego trip, wherein the *Olah* personality becomes

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a holier-than-thou individual, who disdains the more well-rounded, down-to-earth *Shelamim* personalities.

Alternatively, the passion that drives this Olah personality can go too far, as was the tragic case with Nadav and Avihu, Aaron's sons who brought an unauthorized offering and died as a result. *Or Hachaim* and Chassidic literature explain that their sin was too much passion and no desire to engage the physical world.

When people are driven to that extreme, by allowing the passion of their souls to ignite and consume any desire to remain in the physical world, it is a sign that they lack respect for G-d's agenda. G-d's desire for human beings, as opposed to the angels, is for them to stir up as much spiritual passion as is needed to pull themselves above the morass of materialism. But G-d does not desire that they remain above terrestrial matters. They must retreat back down into the "real" world, engage it, affect it and, ultimately, transform it.

Being able to go only in one direction is the hallmark of angels. Humans must learn to change direction when the need arises. We need

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to go in both directions daily. When we pray we let go of the physical world; when we finish praying we retreat back into the world by first engaging our minds in the study of Torah. Equipped with the values and inspiration of both prayer and study we take on the challenge of changing the world.

To facilitate combining the opposites inherent in the Olah offering, the Tosaphists therefore maintain we must also be in touch with our inner sanctum.

The Shelamim Challenge Today

As we stand on the threshold of the Final Redemption, the Shelamim challenge of combining opposites has become more pronounced.

Never before have we seen so much fragmentation and division in the world. While in these momentous times before the imminent final Redemption, empires have crumbled and there is much less conflict between major powers, we are witness to greater divisions within countries, communities and even families.

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In order to create the *Shelamim*-offering, which brings unity among G-d, ourselves and our fellow Jew —and by extension peace for the entire world—we must open the door to the inner sanctum of the Sanctuary.

Translated into practical terms, we must search beneath the surface of ourselves and the other and recognize our inherent unity.

One of the tools to accomplish that goal is the teachings of Chassidus, the inner dimension of Torah, which connects us to the inner layer of Torah and our own personalities.

Within the teachings of Chassidus, the discourses of the Rebbe stand out for their clarity, depth and their focus on Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption.

Indeed, since everything is hinted in the Torah, the Hebrew word *Shelamim* contains within it the initials of the Rebbe's name and the name of his father. More than any Jewish leader, the Rebbe has advanced the cause of *Shelamim* by bringing peace between G-d and Israel and between one Jew and another and has prepared us for Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption!

ESSAY FIVE

MOSHIACH SENSITIVITY

**There are three aspects of exile induced
insensitivity that causes:**

**A false superiority complex; a false inferiority
complex and not being in touch with our G-dly
soul.**

Moshiach will reverse all that.

ESSAY FIVE

MOSHIACH SENSITIVITY

Doubtful Transgressions

The Torah, in this week's parsha, speaks of one who must atone in the event he **may** have committed a transgression but is not sure. He must bring an *asham*-a guilt offering. Although there was neither intention nor malice, nevertheless the Torah demands that he make atonement for the mere possibility that he had transgressed.

Rashi quotes Rabbi Yose the Galilean:

“Here, Scripture punishes someone who did not [even] know [whether he had sinned or not]; how much more so will Scripture punish someone who does indeed know [that he has sinned]!”

Rashi goes on to cite another Rabbi Yose whose words seem to have no bearing on the subject of the possible transgression:

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Rabbi Yose says:

“If you wish to know the reward of the righteous, go forth and learn it from Adam, the first man. He was given only one negative commandment, and he transgressed it. Look how many deaths were decreed upon him and his descendants!

Now, which measure is greater—the bestowing of goodness, or the meting out of punishment? One must say that the measure of goodness is greater.

So if, through the measure of punishment, which is less than that of goodness, look how many deaths were decreed upon himself and his descendants, through the measure of goodness, which is greater, if someone refrains from eating [forbidden foods, like, for instance] *piggul* [a sacrifice rendered invalid because the *Kohain*, while making the offering, intended to partake of the offering beyond its prescribed time] or *nosar* [a portion of a sacrifice left over after its prescribed

time], or if he fasts on Yom Kippur, then how much more so will he earn merit for himself, for his descendants, and for his descendants' descendants, until the very end of all generations?!"

We can easily understand the relevance of Rabbi Yose the Galilean's point. His comments relate to the text that speaks of one who is unsure whether he committed a sin. But what does the comment of the other Rabbi Yose have to do with the offering for a doubtful transgression? Rabbi Yose simply extols the virtue of one who resists transgressing by partaking of forbidden foods. What does that have to do with the case of doubtful transgressions?

Another question can be raised, why does Rabbi Yose cite these three transgressions (*piggul*, *nosar* and eating on Yom Kippur) in particular?

Guilt

To answer these questions we must reflect on the name of the offering for doubtful transgressions. It is called an *asham*-guilt offering as opposed to the offering for definite

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transgression, which is called a *chata*-sin offering.

The question has been raised, which is worse?

When we compare the two, definite versus doubtful transgression, we realize that from one perspective a definite transgression is worse, but from another vantage point a doubtful one is more destructive.

Upon deeper reflection we will see that the two Rabbi Yoses' comments reflect the two opposite ways we view the doubtful versus the definite transgression.

The first comment of Rabbi Yose the Galilean focuses on how a definite sin is worse than a doubtful one because it is possible that the person who is unsure might truly not have done anything wrong. Thus, Rabbi Yose's argument: if even the doubtful sinner has to atone, how much more so, the one who indeed knows that he has sinned!

On the other hand, there is an aspect of a doubtful sin that is worse than a definite one.

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Desensitization

The Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos* volume 3) explains that the problem with a person who is in doubt whether or not he transgressed is that there is usually no adequate feeling of guilt. The person may think that there is a possibility that he had not sinned; so why feel guilt?

The problem is that without guilt there can be no real atonement. Guilt is as to the soul as pain is to the body. When a person feels physical pain it alerts him to the existence of a problem that demands medical attention. If a person is ill but does not feel the pain, that individual's condition will deteriorate, perhaps to the point of being incurable.

Similarly, when one's soul is desensitized to the point that he does not feel guilt, i.e., spiritual pain, he will not be able to reverse the damage to his soul caused by the sin. The doubtful sinner's condition may even degenerate to the point of no return, G-d forbid!

We may suggest that this thought, which is predicated on the sensitivity of the soul, was captured by the second Rabbi Yose's comment: When one desists from transgressing, one earns

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merit for himself and for generations of descendants to come. As we will see, this comment relates to the power of resisting transgression to protect the soul's sensitivity.

The question can be asked, why would one deserve such merit for oneself and for subsequent generations by merely desisting from committing a transgression? Is it heroic for one to refrain from eating either *pigul*, *nosar* or to fast on Yom Kippur?

Undamaged Genetic code

To understand the message contained in these three prohibitions we must refer to the common punishment the Torah prescribes for intentional violation of these transgressions, which is *kares*. *Kares* is translated as "cut off." The sin causes one's soul to be severed from its Divine source. Although those who are guilty of these crimes could continue to live, their existence derives from the forces of impurity that G-d allows to exist to provide us with free choice. We are free to choose whether we want to get our sustenance from a pure source or from a tainted source.

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Thus, when we desist from these transgressions we protect and insulate our souls and guarantee that they will not be sullied. A pure soul is spiritually akin to an undamaged genetic code that gets transmitted to future generations.

We can now understand the connection of Rabbi Yose's statement to the doubtful transgression. The reason a person does not feel guilt when he possibly transgressed is due to the tarnished nature of that person's soul. A sensitive soul will not be placed in a position where it is likely to commit an unintentional sin. Moreover, the person with a sensitive soul will not have doubts about his transgression because sensitive souls will feel themselves becoming contaminated. And if they "slip up" they will feel guilt and seek to cleanse their souls.

When a person fails this sensitivity test it is time to search for where they may have allowed their souls to be cut off.

Three Areas of Insensitivity

In searching for the cause of our insensitivity we must look at three areas symbolized by the

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transgressions of *pigul*, *nosar* and eating on Yom Kippur.

Pigul, as mentioned above, is caused by the *Kohain* thinking or declaring that he intends to eat the sacrifice after the Torah's deadline for eating.

Underlying this transgression is the thought that one may have when one offers a sacrifice. The distorted mindset of the *Kohain* may be: "This is **my** offering; my initiative. I have the right to offer it whichever way I feel is warranted." The approach that we can make up the rules on how we should serve G-d as long as we are still doing it for G-d's sake is deeply flawed and renders that sacrifice *pigul*-“rejected” or “disgusting.” We must not make up our own rules of G-d's service. When we do, we sully our souls because our souls properly respond only to G-d's unadulterated will. As soon as we pervert His will, even if with the best of intentions, the soul recoils and hide in horror and thus begins our desensitization.

The next message is conveyed by the second transgression mentioned by Rabbi Yose: *nosar*. *Nosar* refers specifically to a sacrifice that has

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been allowed to remain beyond its Biblical deadline but it also conveys a more general message that relates to our sensitivity.

The classic work, *Sefer Hachinuch*, (in discussing this commandment as it pertains to the Paschal lamb), explains that a sacrifice is an invitation to partake of G-d's feast as members of His royal family. Royalty does not need to keep leftovers. To keep the sacrifice beyond its deadline is disrespectful to the royal nature of our souls. Furthermore, the word *nosar* can also be rendered as "superfluous." When we believe ourselves to be dispensable and superfluous, thereby demeaning our importance, we cut off our souls from G-d's feast and thus cause their desensitization.

Just as it is wrong to overrate our importance and decide how we want to serve G-d (the *piggul* metaphor), so too, conversely, we must not undervalue our royal significance.

The third area where we can cut ourselves off from G-d and desensitize our souls is represented by the metaphor of eating on Yom Kippur. The great Chassidic Master Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev once commented, "On

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the two fast days Tisha B'av and Yom Kippur there is no need for a commandment not to eat. "On Tisha B'av who could eat, and on Yom Kippur who wants to eat?" On Yom Kippur our souls are uplifted to the highest of realms and we experience the most acute sensitivity to the spiritual. Desisting from eating on Yom Kippur is a sign of the most powerful sensitivity of the soul.

Geulah = Sensitivity

Redemption from exile is, first and foremost, liberation from the elements that cloud our soul's sensitivity and their receptivity to G-d. Galus can be likened to *piggul*-rejection because in Galus our egos dictate how we will serve G-d even if it is in a way that is inconsistent with G-d's will. Galus gives us a superiority complex, where we think we are free to override G-d's will.

And conversely, Galus is also likened to *nosar* because, like in the superfluous nature of *nosar*, we lose our self-respect; we forget our royal heritage. Galus gives us both inferiority and superiority complexes at the same time.

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The ultimate sign of Galus' damage is to be impervious even to the spiritual energy of Yom Kippur; the day the *Yechidah*-essence, the spark of Moshiach of our soul, is revealed.

Our road to Geulah is paved with our efforts to eschew *piggul* and *nosar* aspects of our personality and to get in touch with our Yom Kippur, or for that matter with Purim, which, according to the Zohar is equivalent to and even superior to Yom Kippur.

ESSAY SIX

THE CHILD IN US

Passover is about the children.

This includes the child in us.

That child is our inner state of purity.

Moshiach is about revealing it.

ESSAY SIX

THE CHILD IN US

Beginning in the Middle

It is logical to begin at the beginning.

That might be true for most things, but not for the study of Torah.

According to the Midrash, it is proper to commence Torah study with a child, with the Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus) and not with *Bereishis* (Genesis)!

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 7:3) explains the preference for *Vayikra* in the following manner:

“Why do we begin a very young child’s study of Torah with Leviticus and not with *Bereishis* (Genesis)? Because children are pure and *Korbanos* (sacrificial offerings) are pure; let those who are pure occupy themselves with that which is pure.”

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That children occupy a unique position in Judaism is not a revelation. That giving a child a Jewish education is more crucial than any other religious imperative is a Talmudic principle validated by millennia of Jewish history.

The Midrash recounts how the only guarantors that G-d accepted for the Torah were the children. The Patriarchs and prophets did not suffice.

So important is the Jewish education of a child that Maimonides rules:

“Everyone is obligated to join in the building of the Holy Temple [in Jerusalem]... One does not, however, interrupt the Torah study of children even for the building of the Temple.”

Conventional wisdom says that Jewish education for the young is so important because it is imperative for the survival and future of our nation.

Our Talmudic sages go further. Not only is education of our children an indispensable tool for the future—a means to an end—but, furthermore, the entire world stands on the merit of the Torah study of little children.

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The reason this is so, the Talmud declares, is because the children possess an intrinsic purity which, imbues their Torah study with an aura of purity that cannot be matched by learned and righteous adults.

Miniature Moshiach's

Indeed, the Talmud refers to the children as "*Meshichoi*" my anointed ones, an appellation reserved for the *Moshiach*, Judaism's most exalted personality, because each and every child possesses the quality represented by the Messianic age: purity and innocence.

To be sure, every one of us possesses these "juvenile" qualities. And, in relation to G-d, we are all His little children. The difference between an adult and a child is in the way the purity of our souls is manifested. The children have no outer barrier that obstructs their inner purity and innocence. The lack of the controlling influence of the intellect in childhood serves the children well because this allows them to express their inner holiness without expending much effort.

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The adult, by contrast, must use his or her intellect to uncover the inner purity. The many obstacles that stand between the mind and the heart make the process of revealing our inner spark of Moshiach a challenge.

Pure or Holy?

We can now appreciate the reason for commencing the study of the Torah with the Book of Leviticus which deals with purity and innocence.

A question has been raised as to why the Midrash characterizes the sacrificial offerings as “pure” rather than holy.

Normally, the quality of holiness is superior to purity. In the context of children and Moshiach, however, purity represents the inner essence of our souls. When this child-like innocence and inner essence of our souls is allowed to express itself, it can lead us to the highest levels of holiness.

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Vayikra and the Four Questions

It is perhaps for this reason that in many years we read the Parsha of Vayikra as we enter into the month of Nissan, the month in which we celebrate the twin events of the spring season and the Exodus from Egypt. Both events are expressive of the special quality associated with children.

Passover, of course, highlights the inquisitive child who asks the four questions. Moreover, the entire Seder is structured in a way that encourages the child to ask even more questions. The Exodus from Egypt has been compared by the prophet Ezekiel to the birth and the early development of the Jewish nation.

Even the spring character of Nissan expresses the youthful state of existence which we all possess. Indeed, the physical phenomenon of the blooming of the natural forces in spring parallels and is a reflection of the blossoming of the deepest spiritual forces that occur in the month of Nissan.

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Nissan the Month of Future Redemption

This explains the statement of our Sages,

“In Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they will be redeemed in the future.”

This statement does not preclude Moshiach’s arrival any other time of the year. It merely suggests the appropriateness of Moshiach’s coming in the month of Nissan. The dynamic forces that are generated in Nissan are very much in sync with redemption.

In spiritual terms, the significance of the month of Nissan is that it has the capacity to reveal the inner energies that are “held captive” within creation and within the Jewish soul.

Nissan is the month when the natural purity—the Moshiach quality—of the individual and of the world at large is most easily expressed. Hence, bringing Moshiach in the month of Nissan requires less effort than in other months to “get in touch” with our natural innocence—the Moshiach within.

The Challenge

The challenge ahead of us as we commence reading the Book of *Vayikra* and enter into the month of Nissan is to search for the inner core of our souls, the spark of Moshiach, the Ba'al Shem Tov said we all have.

Reading the words of the Torah that represent the childlike purity and innocence is more than just an intellectual exercise or a religious ritual. The term “*krias Hatorah*—the reading of the Torah” can also be translated as the “invitation of the [spiritual dynamics inherent in] the Torah. Thus, the actual time of the year [the naturally and supernaturally youthful month of Nissan] coupled with the reading of the parsha of Vayikra, provides us with maximum energy to reveal that inner core of Moshiach.

When we succeed in engaging this spark of Moshiach—the child in us—we will join with the children of the world in making this world receptive to the ultimate Redemption, when the “spirit of impurity will be obliterated from the earth.”

ESSAY SEVEN

THE ALEPH LINCHPIN

**Sometimes one letter can transform a word from one
extreme to the other.**

In the Holy Tongue, that letter is the Aleph.

**When inserted in a word it can turn coldness into love and
exile into Redemption.**

ESSAY SEVEN

THE ALEPH LINCHPIN

A Strange Name

Vayikra, or Leviticus, is the third book of the Torah, and it is named after the first word of the book—“*Vayikra*-And He called.” After G-d calls out to Moses (*Vayikra*), He proceeds to detail to him the various forms of offerings that the Jewish people were to bring in the just built Sanctuary.

The opening word of a Biblical book should reflect its character. What message does the rather prosaic word *Vayikra* convey?

Moreover, *Vayikra*, while it is only the third book of the Torah, is also the central book of the Five Books of Moses. Its placement as the central book tells us something about the way we must view it.

To understand the significance of the third book of the Torah and its centrality, let us

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analyze briefly the central themes of the other four books of the Torah.

Two and Two

Bereishis/Genesis, as its name suggests, is about the creation of the world, and Shemos/Exodus is about the creation of a meaningful, purposeful world, with the liberation of the Jewish nation and the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Although the world had already existed for over two thousand years, its existence was not validated until the Torah was given to the Jewish people.

Numbers (“Bamidbar-In the desert,” in Hebrew) and Deuteronomy (or: “Devarim-[Harsh] words of rebuke,” in Hebrew) are about the wanderings, the vicissitudes, the struggles, the trials and tribulations of the Jewish people.

Genesis and Exodus are full of promise and positive energy, while Numbers and Deuteronomy are punctuated with volatility, stress and hardship. How does one fuse the two sets of Biblical narrative?

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One Aleph Makes all the Difference

The linchpin that brings all these elements together is Vayikra-Leviticus, and more specifically, the letter aleph at the end of the word.

The word Vayikra is translated literally as “And He called,” referring to the affectionate way G-d calls out to Moses before He begins telling him about the offerings in the Temple.

Rashi comments that there is another, almost identical, word in Hebrew—*Vayikar*—that means “and He chanced upon him,” that is used in reference to the way G-d approached Bilam, the heathen prophet.

The difference between these two forms of introduction, Rashi explains, is that the former (Vayikra) implies G-d’s desire and pleasure in initiating a conversation with Moses. The latter form (Vayikar) is indicative of a total lack of enthusiasm concerning the ensuing conversation. It is G-d’s way of saying, “I’d rather not have this conversation with you.”

The difference between the two words is a solitary letter: the Hebrew letter “aleph.” The

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word Vayikra has the aleph, the word Vayikar does not.

Pit/Well, Exile/Redemption, Pauper/Head, Blood/Adam, Death/Truth: The Difference is the Aleph

We find other words in Hebrew where the single letter “aleph” determines whether the word is positive or negative. One prime example is the word Golah (without the aleph) and Geulah (with the aleph), which translate as exile and redemption, respectively.

Another example of this aleph-transformation phenomenon can be found in the words *Bor* and *B'er*. The word *bor* means an empty pit, often with the connotation that it is a place of snakes and scorpions, or a place associated with death, while *b'er* means a well that contains refreshing water, referred to in Biblical literature as “*Mayim Chaim*—living waters.”

Another striking example is the Hebrew word for truth—*emet*, which actually connotes something that is consistent, enduring and never ending. If we remove the aleph, it

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becomes met, which means death, and cessation, the very opposite of *emes*.

The word Rosh means head. If we were to remove the aleph the word means impoverished. The aleph transforms the word from a state of utter deficiency, someone on the edge, to a state of leadership.

The most exalted name for a human being is Adam, the name given to the first human. If we were to remove the aleph from the name Adam we are left with the word dam, which means blood. Bereft of the aleph a human being is nothing more than flesh and blood.

What power is vested in the letter aleph that it can so transform a word?

The Power of the Aleph

Aleph, as the first letter of the alphabet, signifies G-d who is the First Cause of everything.

Aleph, as the first letter of the alphabet, is also the number one, alluding to G-d, who is absolutely one.

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The word aleph itself is cognate to the word *Aluf*, which, in Hebrew means a master. (In contemporary Hebrew it is the word for “general.” G-d is referred to as *Aluf shel olam*—the Master of the World.

When we take the Aleph—the awareness of an absolute and singular Master of the World—and insert it into the word golah-exile, we transform exile into geulah-redemption.

When we add the Aleph to the pit and the abyss, we create a life sustaining well.

When we add the Aleph to the word that suggests terminality (met), we convert it into emet—truth, endurance and consistency.

And when we add the Aleph to the word (Vaikar) that implies, lack of interest and a contemptuous relationship, it is transformed into Vayikra, an expression of eagerness to enter into a relationship with the other and an expression of love.

The Book of Vayikra-Leviticus, which focuses on inserting the Aleph into all of our experiences, has the capacity to join the first two books of the Torah (Genesis and Exodus) that deal with birth and rebirth, Creation and Redemption to

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the last two books of the Torah (Numbers and Deuteronomy) that relate to the wanderings, decline and uncertainty of our future.

Connecting the Innocence of Childhood into Adulthood

When a child is born it thrives. But, its life is essentially provided for by others. When he or she achieves adolescence and adulthood and is no longer provided for, all of the problems begin. How do we connect the innocence, exuberance, confidence and joy of our youth (Genesis and Exodus) to the later stages of our lives (Numbers and Deuteronomy)?

The answer is Vayikra. When we begin to see our lives as a loving relationship between G-d and us; when we add the aleph to the events that appear to be chance occurrences; when we see the Divine providence in every happening; when we hear G-d affectionately calling out to us and asking us to take the animal within us and bring it closer to G-d, at that point, we are also ready to make the transition from Golah to Geulah, from the travail of exile to the joy and exhilaration of the ultimate Redemption.

ESSAY EIGHT

MASTERING THE MYSTERY

**The mystery is exile. Moses's existence is to solve the
existential mystery of life.**

Moshiach will reveal this because he possesses Moses' soul

ESSAY EIGHT

MASTERING THE MYSTERY

What Kind of a Name is Vayikra?

Vayikra- "And He called" is the name of the third book of the Torah that we commence reading this week.

Offhand, it does not sound like a very logical name with which to identify a Biblical book. The entire book is about the special and chosen role of the Temple; its sacrifices, and the ceremonies held for its dedication. In addition, the book deals with the special and chosen role and responsibilities of the *Kohain*, the priest, whose job it was to serve in the chosen Temple. From the role of the Kohain whose life was dedicated to holiness, the book of Vayikra deals with behaviors that make us holy.

In short, the entire book is devoted to holiness. The question thus is, what does "And He called"

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have in common with the theme of holiness and “chosen-ness?”

An Enigmatic Midrash

To answer this question, it would serve us well to clarify the words of the Midrash on the opening verse of this book, which, upon deeper reflection will help us to understand the significance of the title “And he called.”

This enigmatic Midrash discusses the name that the Torah uses for Moses, which, of course, is Moses. Despite the fact that Moses actually had **ten** names—the Midrash writes—the name that G-d used to call him was: Moses. This was the name given to him by Basya the daughter of Pharaoh, as the Torah recounts in Exodus.

This Midrashic comment is rather enigmatic:

First, how does the fact that G-d accepted the name Moses have to do with the opening remarks of this book?

Second, Moses name has been mentioned numerous times in the preceding book of Exodus. Why then did the Midrash not made this observation the first time G-d speaks to

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Moses? Why did it wait to discuss the significance of Moses' name in the beginning of the book of *Vayikra*?

And third, why indeed did G-d prefer this name over his other names that were, presumably, given to him by his parents?

The Meaning of the Name Moses

To answer these questions we should reflect on the reason the daughter of Pharaoh gave Moses this name in particular. The Torah writes that she named him Moses because “from the water she **drew him.**” The word for drawing is related to the word Moshe.

When one reflects on Moses' other names, they all relate to qualities he possessed. The name Moses, on the other hand, sounds rather pedestrian—to “draw something out of...”

In truth this name implies something truly remarkable. The water is what covers up whatever is contained in it. We don't see what is in the water unless we dive into it. So, as far as land-based creatures are concerned, water

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symbolizes that which is hidden from their view, elusive and the beyond.

A little true and cute anecdote comes to mind. A little three-year old child accompanied his mother to a store named “Bed, Bath and Beyond.” Upon surveying the contents of the store the puzzled child asked his mother: “I see the beds and the baths, but where is the beyond?”

This is the question that so many of us ask, to which Moses was the answer. Indeed, arguably the most common question we ask is where are you, o G-d? Why are You hiding? Where is the “beyond?”

Moses: The Answer

This question was certainly one on the lips of the Jews in Egypt. They were suffering in Egypt and no help was in sight. Things were getting progressively worse, especially with the advent of the new decree to have all the male children thrown into the Nile. Why? Where was G-d? When will that Power from the beyond make Himself visible to us and take us out of this misery?

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We were baffled. It was a Divine mystery that baffled everyone. No one understood why there was so much suffering and when would the promised salvation come.

And it was the daughter of Pharaoh, who—as our Sages tell us—was going to the Nile river to cleanse herself from her father’s pagan ways, who noticed the basket of Moses floating in the waters of the Nile. Filled with the inspiration of prophecy, she realized that this little baby in the basket floating in the Nile was the key to unraveling the mystery of the Egyptian bondage. This little child was G-d’s way of reaching out to the Children of Israel from the beyond. Through him, the hidden G-d will become revealed.

So when she named him Moses because she pulled him out of the water, it was much more than just a name based on a secondary physical action. This was her way of predicting that this boy will some day reveal the mystery of the bondage and other Divine mysteries as well.

Calling from Beyond

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Where does one find the theme of Divine mystery pronounced in connection with Moses? It is at the beginning of the third Book of the Torah, where it states: "And He called to Moses." It does not say who called, although it is obvious that it is referring to G-d. The fact that it doesn't use G-d's name implies that the Torah is referring to an aspect of G-d that is "beyond," unknowable and unfathomable.

And this is who called Moses by his name by which we are told something of Moses' own character and level. Moses personified revealing the mysteries of the creation and its Creator.

And thus the Midrash stresses that although Moses had multiple names, the one name that expresses his ability to reveal the otherness and "beyond-ness" of G-d, was the name Moses, the name that denotes drawing something hidden out into the open that is highlighted at the beginning of this book.

This serves as introduction to all that will follow. This book is about the holiest aspects of Judaism, the Hebrew word (*kedushah*), which really means apart or beyond. And while the name Leviticus or the Hebrew equivalent *Toras*

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Kohanim (the laws governing priests) might be more descriptive of the content of this book, the name “*Vayikra*-And He called” is more expressive of the soul its soul—the revealing of the hidden aspects of Judaism and of G-d through Moses.

Mastering the Ultimate Mystery

If the Egyptian bondage was a mystery that confounded the Jews at that time, we are certainly witness to an even greater mystery today.

When the Jews were in Egypt they barely spent two centuries, less than half of the four hundred years that were predicted. According to some Midrashic opinions, G-d actually cut short their stay and suffering in Egypt. They were originally intended to stay four hundred years in bondage and they were actually liberated after 210 years. Yet, the people were confused and mystified by their plight.

How much more so should the delay of the Messianic Age, we've been waiting for thousand of years, be considered a mystery. Any attempt at explaining why we are still in exile is futile.

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“All the deadlines have passed,” the Talmud asserts. This means that all the milestones for Redemption have been achieved, and yet we are still in exile. If that was said in the talmudic era, it certainly applies today. There is no rhyme or reason for this *Galus*/exile to endure. Where is Moshiach? Where is Geulah? *Ad Mosai*/How much longer?

The answer to this enigma once more is Moses. The same Moses who mastered the mystery and revealed the hidden forces of G-d that brought an end to the Egyptian exile will be the Moses who will liberate us from the present exile. As the Kabbalists have taught us, Moshiach will possess the soul of Moses and utilize his power to unravel the mystery. Thus the saying: “Moses was the first redeemer and Moses will be the final redeemer.” This does not mean that Moses himself will be the redeemer, but that Moshiach will redeem us with the power that he has from Moses.

The parsha of *Vayikra* is usually read at the beginning of the month of Nissan, the month when the original Redemption occurred. This is no coincidence. It is this unknowable and unpredictable G-dly energy that is alluded to in

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the words “And He called” that is responsible for the Exodus.

Thus, in a week that highlights the mastering of the mystery, in the first week of the month of liberation, is certainly an opportune time to have this enigma resolved and the mystery mastered, with the immediate revelation of Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption.

ESSAY NINE

INTIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

**The degree of closeness with another can be detected in
the way one communicates.**

**The Book of Vayikra is about G-d's most intimate
communication with Moses and Israel.**

ESSAY NINE

INTIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

Why not Leviticus and Where is G-d?

Vayikra is the Hebrew name of the third Biblical book.

The word *Vayikra* means simply “And He called,” a reference to G-d’s call to Moses. This book is also known as *Torat Kohanim* that means “The Laws of Kohanim (priests),” which is, most likely, the basis for the name Leviticus by which this book is popularly known.

One does not have to delve too deeply into the selection of names for a book to be amazed at the name “*Vayikra*-And He called.” What connection does this name have to the book that deals primarily with the laws concerning the priests and their function in the Temple? The other—not-as-popular—name, Leviticus seems to be a far more appropriate name.

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Another glaring question comes to mind. The opening word (and title of book) “*Vayikra*-And He Called” does not tell us who called Moses. Isn’t it odd that the opening sentence of a book should use a pronoun “He” instead of the proper name? Why doesn’t the Torah simply state, “And G-d called Moses?”

Two Methods of Communication

The answer to these two questions is actually intertwined.

When G-d communicates to people, there are different levels of communication that He employs. Much like human communication, there are times when the person is formal and other occasions when the person is informal. In either case the communicator conceals more of his inner feelings than he reveals. Only in the most intimate of relationships, does the communicator expose himself/herself and reveals his/her innermost sentiments.

Usually the degree to which one reveals his true inner feelings is commensurate with the enthusiasm one has to communicate with the other.

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Similarly, there are times when G-d communicates to the world, but He does so in a manner that expresses a lack of enthusiasm. An example of this “lowly” aspect of communication is when G-d spoke to the wicked heathens, Laban and Balaam. His communication to them was perfunctory and reluctant.

On a higher level, when G-d communicates with His prophets, His message is a formal one.

The Uniqueness of the Communication with Moses

Moses was unique, even among prophets. When G-d spoke to Him, He was informal. It was like to friends speaking to one another. There were no formalities that obscure the inner feelings of the communicators.

Indeed, one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith formulated by Maimonides is to believe that Moses’ prophecy was unique. Unlike Moses, all the other prophets received their communication from G-d in a dream or a trance like state. G-d’s mode of communication with Moses, by contrast, was clear and intimate.

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But even friends do not always divulge their innermost feelings to one another on all occasions. There are certain sentiments that are reserved for the most important and cherished occasions.

Special Communication

How do we know when the Torah speaks of such an occasion? When the Torah tells us that G-d spoke to Moses—mentioning the name of G-d—we know that it was a routine communication, relative to other communications with Moses because the name of G-d denotes that G-d has cloaked Himself in some defining garb that “allows” Him to relate to a specific situation and message. G-d’s essence is hidden, even when the Torah says that G-d spoke to Moses, because a name of G-d describes G-d as He is manifests Himself in a limited and focused way.

Even the name *Havaye*—(known as the Tetragrammaton), the most essential name of G-d, which G-d did not reveal to the Patriarchs who lived before Moses—describes G-d as He

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allows Himself to be expressed through a defining and limiting name.

When the Torah begins the book of *Vayikra*, it does not mention G-d's name, not even the name *Havaye*. By omitting the mention of G-d, and replacing it with "the pronoun "And He called", it expresses the idea that in this communication G-d removed all the barriers that existed previously in all the previous communications with Moses.

***Vayikra*: The Book of Affection**

This "calling out to Moses," Rashi therefore says is an expression of affection. During this communication G-d "bared His soul" so to speak and revealed His innermost Divine essence to Moses that transcended any of G-d's communications that were expressed by and contained in a name.

We can now appreciate why the entire book is so entitled "*Vayikra*-And He called." By leaving out G-d's name, this opening word defines the nature of the relationship that exists between G-d and the Jewish people through the commandments that are contained in this book.

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Through the Temple and its rituals—the immediate topic that follows the introductory verse of *Vayikra*—G-d would reveal His essential Being to the Jewish people. This book is thus the book of Divine intimacy.

Removing the Cloak for All

Our prophets tell us, and our sages have expounded on the theme, that in the Messianic Age, G-d's relationship with us will be one where there are no barriers. "Your Master shall no longer cloak Himself." G-d's intimate relationship with us will be unimpeded by any form of external cover. What Moses experienced then will become the universal experience.

This idea that in the future Messianic Age we will all experience the intimate communication with G-d is actually mentioned in the Midrash on this week's parsha. "

"What is the difference between Moses and the other prophets? R. Yehudah ben Ila'i and the rabbis differed: R. Ila'i stated: 'other prophets would see through nine prisms... and Moses saw though one prism...' The rabbis said:

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‘other prophets saw through a tinted prism and Moses saw through a radiant prism. R. Pinchas in the name of R. Hoshiya said, ‘this can be compared to a king who reveals himself to his family member in person. For in the present the Divine presence is revealed only to individuals, but in the future ‘the glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of G-d has spoken it (Isaiah 40:5).”

Here the Midrash compares the unique mode of G-d’s communication with Moses (“through one radiant prism”) to the mode of communication we will all experience in the future Messianic Age.

Preparing for Intimacy

If the mode of communication we will experience in the Messianic Age will be so direct and powerful, it is obvious that we need to prepare for such a major transition. After all the period of *Galus*/exile we are in presently is where G-d’s presence is utterly concealed. To go

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from one extreme to another requires a transitional approach.

One way of preparing for this age of unbridled G-dly revelation is to study the mystical teachings of Judaism as they were transmitted in Chassidic thought. These teachings have been described as the intimate secrets of Judaism that have been kept secret for most of history.

As we get closer to the ultimate Messianic Age when these teachings will be fully revealed, we can prepare ourselves for this experience by delving into this formerly secret discipline. By studying the Torah's inner dimension, we reveal our own souls' inner dimension, which, in turn connects us to the inner essence of G-d.

ESSAY TEN

ADAM'S SACRIFICE

No matter our state of mind and the state of our environment which causes us to sin we can always turn a new leaf.

ESSAY TEN

ADAM'S SACRIFICE

Ish and Adam: Two Models

The book of *Vayikra*/Leviticus that we commence reading this week, focuses primarily on the ritual sacrifices the Jews brought in the Sanctuary. To introduce the laws governing sacrifices, the Torah states: “A person who shall make an offering..”

In the Hebrew language there are many ways of saying person. The most common is *ish*. In our text, however, the Torah uses the title *adam*, a name that applies to every person because they descend from the first person—Adam.

Biblical commentators have searched for the deeper meaning in employing the title *adam* rather than the more conventional *ish* in the context of sacrifices and have come up with a multitude of answers.

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Midrash Tanchuma provides the following explanation:

“Just as Adam sinned and brought a sacrifice, so shall you do the same.”

This explanation itself begs for further clarification. Why does the Torah have to draw an analogy from Adam to teach us the value of a sacrifice?

There are several approaches that can be taken to answer this question.

No sin too Severe

One might have thought that Adam’s sacrifice would not have been accepted by G-d, because his sin was so severe. After all, Adam was G-d’s own handiwork and he heard the commandment not to partake of the Tree of Knowledge directly from G-d. How could he have violated this commandment and still atone for it?

If G-d could accept Adam’s gesture of atonement—by offering a sacrifice—certainly G-d could forgive us for our mistakes that are far less serious than Adam’s.

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The term Adam is often used to describe the ideal person, whose intellect governs his emotions. When a person whose intellect is not that honed commits a crime, we can understand how he can atone for it. By drawing upon one's higher self; one intellect, they can shore up their weaknesses. But, how can one who has full access to these more sophisticated faculties atone?

The Torah thus says, even the Adam can bring an offering to G-d. They do this by transcending themselves; rising above the constraints of their sophisticated spiritual structure.

No Excuses

In a somewhat opposite approach, *Kesav Sofer* explains that one could have imagined that Adam did not need to atone because Adam could have used the argument that he was seduced into eating the forbidden fruit by his wife Eve. This is precisely what Adam said when G-d confronted him:

"The woman that you gave me, she is the one who enticed me and I ate."

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Adam could have then argued that he did not need to atone for something that was someone else's doing. This argument is one that we frequently hear in defense of certain criminals—that it is not their fault but society's for creating the environment and the inducements for the crime.

To reject this defense, the Midrash emphasizes that even Adam needed atonement for his sin despite the fact that he was induced and seduced into transgression. Similarly, we too cannot escape the need for atonement by placing the blame on others.

When a person is ready to change, it is crucial that they take full responsibility for their actions. And while there might be some legitimate defenses for one's errant ways, the only way we can escape these situations is to be honest with ourselves and accept full responsibility—something Adam did not do.

It's Never Too Late

A third approach as to why it is important to know that Adam sinned and procured atonement is because it provides us with the

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comfort of knowing that even we **start** on the wrong foot and messes up our life when we are young, there is always hope that we can change.

Notwithstanding the conventional wisdom that what we are taught when we are young stays with us, we are not a prisoner of our youth's indiscretion.

To be sure, Judaism believes strongly in the principle that proper moral indoctrination in one's formative years is the most crucial ingredient in cultivating good behavior for the rest of one's life. However, by telling us how Adam atoned for his sin, the Torah teaches, inspires and empowers us to change even when we "blew it," at the very outset.

While it is never too early to begin inculcating the core values of Judaism—the earlier and the more the better—it is also never too late to turn one's life around.

Metaphor for Jewish History

The span of a person's life is a metaphor for the span of human history. Indeed, the Kabbalists likened all of history to a human body and that

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we—the last generations of exile—are compared to the heels of Adam, the first generation of history.

The message conveyed to us by the abovementioned Midrash—that compares our ability to be atoned for to Adam's—can be applied to our generation in particular.

When one reflects on all the negative influences that we have experienced from our very youth—war, crime, bigotry, licentiousness and other vices—we might think that it is impossible for us—who have seen more evil than any other generation—to break out of this negative cycle.

When one further considers the unprecedented degree to which we can easily access all of the negative influences that exist in every part of the world—one can become disheartened. How can I raise my children and myself to be righteous and resist the negative influences with which we are bombarded? And if we do succumb to these influences, how can we get out of this rut? It is easy to see how a pessimistic outlook can prevail.

Our teachings of Torah, teach us otherwise.

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In the teachings of Kabbalah, specifically, we are informed that we are all part of Adam's soul. When the Torah tells us how Adam was able to rehabilitate himself, the Torah speaks not only of the individual person called Adam, but it refers also to all of humanity, from head to toe, including our generation. We all must, can and will rehabilitate ourselves.

Let's Roll!

Moreover, the Kabbalists inform us that when it seems that we've reached rock bottom, it is precisely then that the sacrifices we make to maintain the standards of goodness and righteousness, will usher in an age that will even transcend the level of Adam—this is the level of Moshiach.

As bleak as it may seem to many, the way our generation is successfully meeting the challenge and struggling against the evil in so many forms—our response to the events of 9/11 is one dramatic example of that—will redeem humanity and usher in an age of perpetual peace and goodness. It is crucial for us to remember that this grandiose vision for the

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future begins with but one small act of sacrifice,
one small gesture of going against the tide of
negativity in whichever form it may take. Let's
roll!

ESSAY ELEVEN

SYNTAX AND SIN-TAX

The idea of a sacrifice is to get close to G-d.
Getting close to G-d requires taking all of us,
including our “animals” with us.

ESSAY ELEVEN

SYNTAX AND SIN-TAX

Grammatical Anomalies

The book of *Vayikra*/Leviticus revolves primarily around the theme of sacrifices. If we were to translate the introductory verse, word for word, this is what it would yield:

“A person [*Adam*] who shall make an offering of you [*mikem*], an offering to G-d; from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall offer your offering.”

There are several grammatical anomalies in this verse, but the most glaring one is the placement of the word “*mikem* [of you.]” Proper Hebrew syntax would have dictated that the verse ought to read as follows: “One of you who shall make an offering.” Why is the Hebrew word *mikem*, which translates as “of you” placed at the end of the phrase rather than in the beginning?

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Another question that is raised is the usage of the word Adam for person. Usually, the term for person in the Torah is *ish* (see preceding essay).

It's From You and Up to You

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad Chassidic movement, answers the first question in his classic work, *Likkutei Torah*. There he explains that the point of this verse is that the idea of bringing a sacrifice and coming closer to G-d (which is the real meaning of the word *korban*) is to bring the sacrifice from oneself; from one's own animal nature.

The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson, adds that the word *mikem*-of you also connotes that it is incumbent upon you, and that you have the ability to do it. Nobody should say that it is impossible for me to get closer to G-d. No matter how far one has strayed they can bring themselves back to G-d.

Hence the new way of understanding this verse in light of the two novel interpretations of the word *mikem* is: If a person wants to get close to

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G-d, it must come **from you** and it is **up to you** to do it.

However, these complementary explanations do not answer the second question as to the usage of the appellation *Adam* rather than the more common *ish* for the word person.

Everybody Needs to Get Closer

One simple approach to this matter is that when the Torah discusses sacrifices it leaves the impression that they are intended for sinners. People whose animal nature gets the best of them are in need of getting close, precisely because they have gone so far. But, the spiritually sophisticated individuals need not take these laws to heart. They are already close to G-d. Why the need for a *korban*, the sacrifice which is designed to bring you close?

To dismiss this notion that an Adam, a highly spiritually sensitive individual need not apply for “korban therapy,” the Torah employs the word Adam. Even if you are the most spiritual person, you need to get even closer.

We Can Bring Moshiach Closer

Another way of interpreting the usage of the word Adam is to see this word as an acronym for three people: Adam, David and Moshiach. And this is how this verse can be translated: “If one wants to bring Moshiach close, it is up to you.” (See *Yalkut Moshiach U’Geulah*)

There is a notion that Moshiach’s coming is in G-d’s hands and that we should just devote ourselves to doing good and let G-d take care of when to bring Moshiach. This is patently contrary to every statement found in Jewish classical writings (Torah, Talmud, Midrash, Kabbalah, etc.). Indeed, Jewish literature is replete with exhortations to us to do more Mitzvot, pray, study Torah, increase charity, etc, etc., in order to hasten the coming of Moshiach.

Suppressing the Animals with Us

In light of this novel interpretation—that it is in our hands to bring Moshiach—how do we explain the end of the verse “from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall offer your offering?” What do animals have to do with bringing Moshiach closer?

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On one level it means that the way to bring Moshiach is to refine and tame the animal within; the animal nature we possess that is responsible for our errant ways. When we return to G-d by suppressing the evil impulses that originate in our animal souls are we ready for the Geulah-the Redemption.

Taking the Animal with Us

But there is a deeper way of understanding this verse in light of the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh. Moses demanded the freedom of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. Yet, Moses repeatedly emphasized that he wanted that their animals should also leave with the Israelites.

Why was he so concerned about the animals? In the desert, they did not need the animals for food. No normal person would want to delay their freedom because of some cattle that they would have to leave behind.

The reason given in Kabbalah and Chassidic thought is that a person's property is an extension of himself or herself. Just like the soul was given a body to inhabit, the possessions of

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a person are considered to be an extension of their body.

The reason the soul entered into this world was to affect the body. Every person is obliged to see to it that their soul meets the challenge of affecting their body—both in the literal and narrow sense as well as in the extended and broad sense of the word. And if by Divine Providence, a person is endowed with a certain amount of wealth and possessions, it is their duty to cherish them by using them for noble purposes. By eating meat, using animals for farm work that will produce food for people, etc. and then using the benefits that accrue from eating and farming, for example, to better serve G-d and humanity, then, in effect, we've fulfilled the purpose for which our soul entered this world.

Thus, when Moses demanded of Pharaoh "Let my people go, so that they may serve me," he was referring to the people in their entirety—soul and body in all senses of the word.

No One and Nothing will be Left Behind

Similarly, when Moshiach comes to take us out of exile, it is crucial that he takes all of us. No Jew will be left behind, we are told, and no part of the Jew will be left behind. This is because the very goal of the Messianic Era is to transform the entire physical world into a dwelling place for G-d. We dare not leave anyone or anything connected to us behind.

Thus, the Torah when addressing the way to bring Moshiach closer emphasizes that we do so by bringing ourselves closer. But even that does not suffice. It is imperative that we bring all of part of our personality, even the animal nature closer. And it doesn't stop there. We must also bring all of our possessions, represented by the different animals that we own, closer to G-d. That not only hastens the process of Moshiach's arrival, it is a part of the process itself.

ESSAY TWELVE

A JOINT OFFERING

Men and women bring different strengths to their marriage.

The woman's need for marriage is to express her selfness devotion to another.

This G-dly feminine trait characterizes the Messianic Age dynamic.

ESSAY TWELVE

A JOINT OFFERING

It's a Team Effort

This week's Torah portion—*Vayikra*—introduces the subject of sacrifices and offerings with the words:

“A person [*Adam*] who shall make an offering of you [*mikem*], an offering to G-d; from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall offer your offering.”

The usage of the word *Adam* to describe a person is problematic. In most places the Torah employs the term *ish* rather than *Adam*. Many explanations have been offered as to this unusual choice of words. (See preceding essays.)

The Zohar—the principle work of Kabbalah—addresses this issue and make a startling observation: “When a person marries a woman, [the union of] the masculine and the feminine,

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he is called Adam and is fit to offer. This excludes one who did not marry; his offering is not a [full fledged] offering.”

On the surface, this comment is very difficult to digest. How does a person’s marital status affect the offering he or she brings to the Temple?

Second, why does one have to be married in order to be called Adam? Wasn’t Adam a single person even before he married Eve?

Third, why does the Zohar limit its statement to a man “who marries a woman?” It should have stated simply “if one is married.”

A Man without a Woman and a Woman without a Man

To answer these questions let us analyze another similar statement made by the Talmudic sages: “A man without a woman is not a complete person.”

It is interesting to note that the Talmud does not say that a woman without a man is not a complete person. Although one may surmise that the same is true for a woman, the question still remains, why doesn’t the Talmud simply

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state that one is not a complete person without a spouse?

It may be suggested that although marriage is what makes each spouse's life complete, as the Zohar says that marriage is the reunion of two half souls separated at birth, nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between the way a man and a woman benefit from marriage. And this difference is based on the way the Torah describes the creation of Adam and Eve.

Adam was created a complete human being. After that a part of him was removed to form Eve. In effect, Adam was rendered a deficient human being, only to be restored to his complete stature when G-d brought Eve to him and they became one again.

Eve, on the other hand, was created as an independent being without ever having been deficient. From the very moment Eve was formed she was complete. Adam's existence did not take anything away from Eve, whereas Eve's existence was at the expense of Adam.

Thus, it may be argued that marriage for Adam is fundamental to his being. With marriage

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Adam is restored to his state of wholeness. With Eve marriage serves to make Adam whole.

For the man, marriage is first and foremost self-serving; for the woman, marriage is first and foremost a selfless act. This does not mean that men cannot bring selflessness to their marriage and that women do not benefit from marriage. This does mean, though, that for women marriage is fundamentally the surrender of her natural state of existential independence, while for men, marriage is the completion of their existential state.

We can now answer the second question posed above; why a person is not called Adam unless he is married. As explained, Adam represents man as he was before Eve was taken from him. In addition, Adam is also the state of man after he is married and Eve is restored to him.

An Unblemished Offering

We can now also understand the comment of the Zohar that a sacrifice must ideally come from a man who is married. As long as one is single; he is missing a fundamental part of his personality. As such he cannot really get close

to G-d, which is the essence of a *korban*/sacrifice. To get close to G-d one must be whole. Just as the animal that one offers must not be blemished, and the Kohain who ministers in the Temple must not be blemished, so too, the person who offers the sacrifice must be whole in order for his offering to be complete.

Moreover, getting close to G-d means that one is in the process of fulfilling his life's mission. As long as one does not have his other half restored to him, he is missing some of his ability to realize his potential. This does not mean that he cannot serve G-d; it does mean that he must compensate for the spiritual potential that a single man lacks.

Imitating the Celestial Marriage

Another way of understanding the Zohar's comment that a man who is not married cannot offer a complete sacrifice is based on the ultimate goal of the sacrifice to create a state of peace and harmony between G-d and His world. Just as food is what brings the soul and body together, so too, the sacrifices, characterized as

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celestial food, bring G-d—the Soul of the world—and the world together.

This state of peace and harmony between G-d and the world generated by sacrifices is the spiritual source of and parallel to marriage between a man and a woman. When one of these marriages is undermined it adversely affects the other as well. If our relationship with G-d is shaky, it affects the earthly marriage between man and woman. And conversely, when a marriage experiences difficulty, or there is an absence of marriage altogether, it threatens the stability of the celestial marriage.

This is why our Sages state that when a man divorces his wife the altar sheds tears. The altar is the medium through which the “marriage” between G-d and His world is executed. When the marriage down here is dissolved it affects the celestial marriage as well.

We can now understand why the Zohar says that the sacrifice of one who is not married is not a complete sacrifice. The objective of the sacrifice is to bring about the marriage between G-d and Israel. If the one who offers the sacrifice does not enjoy the state of unity and

marriage in his own life, how can he effect the much greater and more encompassing union?

The Ultimate Marriage

The coming of Moshiach is regarded by our Sages as the completion of the marriage between G-d and His people. The relationship between G-d and ourselves began at Sinai, but will culminate with the coming of Moshiach.

Our way of preparing for this time requires that we engage in actions that are reflections of the future Messianic Age. If the Messianic Age is the time for the ultimate marital unity and bliss, it follows that we prepare for that wedding by pursuing marriage and marital harmony.

The greater the Shalom Bayis, domestic peace, the more we prepare ourselves and generate the requisite energy for the ultimate experience of Shalom Bayit of G-d and Israel.

More specifically—in light of the above—the way we prepare for the future Messianic age is to combine the two qualities that are represented by the man and the woman in the

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context of marriage. Marriage for the man, as stated is his completion. Moshiach will bring completion and perfection to everyone and everything. Thus the masculine way of preparing for the Redemption is to do those things that bring wholeness and perfection.

For a woman, marriage is her state of surrendering her being to another. Marriage is not simply enhancement of one's being; it represents total self-abnegation.

This is the second and higher dimension of Redemption where we attain the peak of surrender to G-d; where our entire being become submerged in G-d's being.

In practical terms, the preparation for the Redemption involves the performance of the positive commandments and actions geared to enhancing our spiritual sensitivity. In addition, we must refrain from negative behavior that involves suppressing our nature, surrendering our ego and transcending our own existence.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

**NOT ALL ANIMALS WERE
CREATED EQUAL**

Our animal traits may be kosher if they are used for higher purposes.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

NOT ALL ANIMALS WERE CREATED EQUAL

Three Species: Three Idols

This week's Torah portion—*Vayikra*—features the many types of animal sacrifices that one would bring to the Temple. Some sacrifices were from sheep, some from goats and some from oxen.

Maimonides explains in his Guide for the Perplexed that the reason for the Torah's selection of these three species is connected to the notion that sacrifices were designed to repudiate the various forms of idolatry that were prevalent at that time. The Egyptians worshipped the lamb, the Babylonians worshipped the goat and the Indians worshipped the cow. Whenever any of these sacrifices were offered it reinforced the conviction that these idols were powerless.

Maimonides' thesis is based on one aspect of the need for sacrifices. From this perspective,

sacrifices serve a pedagogic end—to wean people off their idolatrous practices. However, in Maimonides' magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides sees a more positive and mystical side to sacrifices, although he does not elaborate on it.

Not a Sacrifice

Kabbalistic and Chassidic thought, however, does provide an alternative explanation for the selection of these three animal species that is linked to a different, and more positive, understanding of sacrifices.

The English translation of the word *korban* as sacrifice suggests that we are using and destroying the animal for our own purposes. However, the word *korban* has a completely different connotation.

Chassidic thought quotes the commentator *Rabeinu Bachaye* who points to the Hebrew word for sacrifice: *Korban*, that is etymologically related to the word *korov* that means to get close. A *Korban* is thus our way of getting close to G-d.

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However, the question can be raised, if a *korban* is intended to bring us closer to G-d, why do we need the animal?

This reminds us of the humorous story of the man who hired a horse and wagon and wagon driver to transport his merchandise to the fair. But the horse was so old and weak that the merchant and the coach driver had to push it uphill and restrain it going downhill. When he arrived at his destination, he asked the coach driver: "I know why I'm here, and I know what you do. I even understand what function the wagon serves. But why do we need the horse?"

The Obstacle to Getting Closer

To get closer to G-d one must consider that which separates one from Him. Each one of us is a composite of two personalities: our G-dly soul and our animal soul. Our G-dly soul's interest is to maintain a close relationship with G-d. But the G-dly soul's ambition is hampered by the animal soul's desire to satisfy its own selfish needs and interests.

There are two ways one can overcome the problem that our animal soul has created. The

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first is to shun the animal soul and destroy it. The second approach is to get the animal soul itself to shed its negative traits and to get closer to G-d.

The Goring Ox in the Service of G-d

In order to accomplish this objective, one must understand the nature of one's animal soul. Not all animal souls were created equal. Some animal souls are like a goring ox. In the modern vernacular we would refer to this personality as a bull in a china shop. This personality has no regard for the other person, and will aggressively trample anything or anyone in his path.

To bring a *Korban* from an ox is to get the raging bull to use his strength and determination for positive purposes. No matter how many obstacles there might be in one's path to doing good, the rehabilitated ox will push its way through all of them. The goring ox becomes a passionate force for all that is good and holy.

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In addition, the goring ox personality becomes a fighter, an iconoclast; fighting against every evil institution and ideology.

The Animal Indulging on G-d

There are other animal souls that are more like a timid lamb. The problem with the lamb personality is that it is totally self-absorbed and interested in the satisfaction of its appetite.

Self gratification and even narcissism can also be employed in the service of G-d. Rather than focusing on physical pleasures in which to indulge, the lamb *Korban* is where the person discovers the immense joy and sense of satisfaction in doing spiritual things. One can also derive enjoyment and pleasure from Torah study and helping others. And there can also be no greater blissful state than to communicate with G-d during prayer.

In addition, the timidity of the lamb personality makes it easier for this individual to reconcile with others. The weaker the ego of the animal soul the greater the opportunity to overlook a slight to one's ego and forgive and forget.

Holy Chutzpah

The third animal soul type is the goat, or brazen individual. This animal soul has a lot of chutzpah and is not intimidated by anyone.

This negative personality can also be brought close to G-d by employing chutzpah in the service of G-d. Rather than being a follower of every fad, one becomes a leader in doing unconventionally positive things. In the words of the Mishnah, "Be bold as a leopard." Do not be influenced by peer pressure; become a leader and not just a follower.

Instead of destroying the animal characteristics that we possess, a *korban* involves taking these very characteristics and employing them for positive ends.

The ultimate *korban* then is to harness one's animal tendencies that they too shall want to get close to G-d, each animal soul in its own inimitable way.

The Wolf Will Lie with the Lamb

One of the most famous prophecies concerning the Messianic Age is the one of, "the wolf will

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dwell with the lamb.” (Parenthetically, the often misquoted version of, “the Lion will lie with the lamb” was probably caused by confusing this phrase with a subsequent phrase where it states, “And the lion will eat straw like the ox.”)

The talmudic Sages argued as to whether this verse is to be taken literally. According to the opinion that it is a metaphor it is understood by Maimonides to refer to the way all the nations will live in peace with Israel.

One can also find another metaphoric interpretation of this phenomenon in light of the above analysis of the deeper meaning of the animal sacrifice:

It is a description of how the animal nature within man will be transformed to the point that even the animal within us will be brought close to G-d. Even the part of our personality that is like a devouring wolf will become tame.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

THE SOUL OF THE POOR MAN

A holy form of poverty is called humility.

**This is when a person who has wealth knows that he owes
everything to the One Above.**

ESSAY FOURTEEN

THE SOUL OF THE POOR MAN

Three Types of Offering

Our parsha, *Vayikra*, features the various kinds of offerings one can bring to the Temple. One can bring cattle, sheep, goats, doves or a flour offering, depending on the economic state of the one who makes the offering. The wealthiest can afford the larger animals, the middle class a bird; but the poor have to make due with a flour offering.

When we analyze the way the Torah introduces the various offerings, we see how it introduces the poor man's offering in a unique way. Rather than saying "If one would bring a flour offering," in the same manner as it states "if one would bring a lamb," or "if one would bring a bird," the Torah states "If a **soul** shall bring the flour offering." The word soul is only used for a poor man's offering.

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Why, we are entitled to ask, does the Torah mention the word soul only in conjunction with the poor man's offering?

The Poor Man and His Soul

Rashi, the principal Bible commentator, explains that when a poor person brings an offering, "the Holy One Blessed is He regards it as if he has offered his own soul."

At first glance it seems that the Torah employs the term "soul" with respect to a poor man's offering in order to not denigrate the poor man's meager contribution. People generally judge other people's efforts by their monetary value. If one gives more, it is then regarded as a greater Mitzvah in the eyes of most people. G-d, the Torah informs us, has a different way of weighing the value of a contribution. It is not the quantity of the effort; it is the quality that counts.

Rich Condescension

While this lesson is certainly true, there must also be a more direct lesson for the rich person,

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with respect to the way he makes his own offering; not just how he should view the poor man's efforts.

Poor and rich are metaphors for two qualities or traits that everyone—rich or poor—possesses. There is the part of us that is rich. Whether it is our knowledge or talent, G-d has endowed each and every one of us with great gifts. The “rich” part of our personality tends to be arrogant and condescending.

And even when the rich part of us is called upon to give and share our wealth with others, it is done with the feeling that we are sacrificing **our** own time, energy and resources for others. The sense of self, of one's ego—“I am the benevolent and sacrificing individual”—permeates the otherwise selfless act of giving.

The Humble Soul

There is also a part of us that is poor. It is the part of us that is humble. In fact, the Hebrew word humble *anav* has the same Hebrew letters as the word for poor—*ani*. The trait of poverty is the part of us that always feels open and receptive to others. It is the part of us that feels

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that **we** gained by giving to others far more than what we might have given.

Even a person endowed with all forms of wealth, possesses the potential to be humble. Witness the Patriarchs, Moses, King David and Rabbi Yehudah *Hanassi* (complier and editor of the Mishnah), who were simultaneously some of the richest—materially and spiritually—people that ever lived, and also among the most humble.

How can one be both aware of his or her talents and accomplishments and be humble? How could a Moses, for example, be aware of how G-d chose him to be the liberator and law-giver of the Jewish people and still remain humble?

The answer to this question lies in the ability of these individuals to dig deeply into the core of their souls, at which point they were humbled by its recognition of G-d and the wealth that is **His** gift.

When our soul is the gift giver it knows from where it really comes. It is the body, the animal soul and the conscious mind that is arrogant and selfish. From their vantage point, giving

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itself is an act of self enhancement and can add to the person's ego.

So when the Torah describes how the poor man offers his soul when he makes his otherwise meager offering to G-d, it can be referring to every person. No matter how richly endowed we are, we must realize that it is all G-d's gift to us.

But the way we come to this realization is to see ourselves through the prism of our soul, which is always aware of G-d and humbled in His presence.

Poor Man Riding on a Donkey

Moshiach is described in the Bible as "a poor man riding on the donkey." Commentators explain that the word donkey in Hebrew, *Chamor* also means materialism.

In light of this new translation, the meaning of the statement that "Moshiach is poor and rides on a donkey" is that while Moshiach will be extremely wealthy in all senses of the word, he will nevertheless be humble. Unlike most wealthy people who are governed by their

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possessions, by their materiel, Moshiach's core humility will "ride his materiel," control his "donkey," so to speak."

Moshiach is the ultimate example of a person who is totally receptive to G-d and to every other person. Rather than looking down at those whom he helps, Moshiach looks up to everyone.

In other words, Moshiach's humility come from his ability to control his material existence. Once the physical is subordinated and under control, the soul's natural sense of awe in the presence of G-d is felt ever so keenly. And once that awareness is revealed one can only be humble.

Moshiach's enhanced capacity to see the needs of others derives from the way his soul's light is not in any way obstructed.

Moreover, as the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut reveal, Moshiach is endowed with the highest level of the soul—known as the *Yechidah*—from which vantage point there is absolutely nothing else but G-d . There is no room for ego and ulterior motives. When one

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gives from the Yechidah of his or her soul, the giving is pure and unmitigated generosity.

Giving of the Soul and the Soul of Giving

The lesson for everyone based on the Talmudic statement that giving of *tzedakah* (usually translated as charity, but more precisely as righteousness) hastens the Redemption is that notwithstanding our wealth, in whichever area we are endowed, when we share it with others we do it with a sense of humility; we give our very souls.

And conversely, when we invest our soul in our giving we do so in the most sensitive, loving and humble fashion, acting like the quintessential “poor man”—Moshiach—thereby hastening the final Redemption.

Humble One, the Time of Your Redemption has Arrived!

The Midrash states that Moshiach will stand on the roof of the Holy Temple and announce “Humble ones, the time of your Redemption has arrived!”

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Why does Moshiach address us as “humble one” when he announces the Redemption?

One way of understanding this epithet is that in order for us to be worthy and prepared for the Redemption, it is crucial that we give tzedakah. But, in order for the tzedakah to be totally selfless, it must be given in the spirit of humility that emanates from the soul.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP

There is a symbiotic relationship between a true leader and his followers.

What affects one affects the other.

When we act in a royal fashion, our leader too can reveal his true greatness.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP

Leader's Sins Hurts Followers

In this parsha the Torah lists and details the various types of sin offerings. First, the Torah discusses “the anointed priest who shall sin so as to bring guilt on the people.” The Torah proceeds to describe the atonement sacrifice he must bring to the Temple.

What does the Torah mean when it says that the priest's sin brings guilt on the people?

Rashi, the principal commentator of the Torah, explains that when the High Priest sins it brings guilt on the people since they depend on him for their own atonement. Now that he has been compromised by his own sins, the people have lost someone who would help remove their guilt.

In other words, when a leader is found to be deficient it harms the people whom he leads.

Followers Sins Diminish the Leaders

There is an opposite way of explaining the relationship of the High Priest's sin and the guilt of the people. Whereas Rashi's explanation sees how the people are harmed when their leader is deficient, the other explanation cited by some commentators is that when we see a Jewish leader that seems flawed it is because of the guilt of the people.

We are quick to criticize our leaders. But, the above explanation exhorts us to first examine our own ways. Perhaps the leaders are reflecting our own shortcomings.

Leader's Sins Help his Followers

There is a third explanation of the relationship between the sins of the leaders and the nation. G-d will orchestrate that a leader will do something that appears to be a sin, so that his repentance will serve as a model for the people to change when they sin.

In other words, the leader's actions will have a direct salutary effect on his followers. In most cases his positive contributions will spur the

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positive activities of his followers, while in some cases his lapses and the way he responds to them are what create a positive ripple effect.

An Organic Relationship

The common denominator of all these explanations is that there is a dynamic relationship between our nation and its true leaders. Whatever affects one side of the equation affects the other side.

In truth, all three explanations reflect the symbiotic relationship between a true leader and his people. Indeed, Torah sources demonstrate that there is an organic connection between them.

There are two explanations for this phenomenon:

The first explanation taken from the Chassidic classic, the Tanya, has to do with the nature of our souls and the relationship between them.

All of our souls originate in the highest spiritual realms. And all souls share the same Divine source. From their nexus they separate and descend into this world through different

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channels. Some souls do not undergo any significant change as they enter into the body—these are the “head” souls. Most other souls go through a lengthy process of acclimation to the worlds through which the soul “travels” in its sojourn to earth. These souls represent everything besides the head, including the “toes” and the “toe-nail” souls.

But, no matter how much a soul undergoes this process of change—even a so-called “toe-nail” soul—always retains its connection to its source. This connection it retains by way of its attachment to the “head” souls, whose spirituality is virtually the same “down here” as it was “up there.” The stronger our ties with the head souls, the more vibrant is our connection with our Divine source.

In effect, all of our souls are connected to one another through their connection to the head souls.

The human body is often cited as an example of this relationship. The human body consists of organs that are all connected to the brain and heart; and by that connection they are all connected to one another. And therefore, when

one organ is deficient it can affect all the other organs and the brain and heart as well. Conversely, when the brain is affected it hurts all the other limbs of the body.

Thus, when one soul is in some way stained, as a result of the sins the person committed, it affects all the other souls, including the head soul

“There is No King without a Nation”

The second explanation—also based on the Tanya—refers to the role of the leader as a king. The very intuition of the monarchy is one that is generally misunderstood. Contrary to the popular notion of an absolute monarch, a king is not a dictator. In order for a leader to be considered a king, rather than a dictator or just a managerial style leader, the nation must declare the utter devotion and loyalty to him.

Kabbalah teaches us that the person endowed with the capability of being a king does not want to be a king. This is because the faculty of kingship is embedded more deeply in the soul than any other trait.

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To understand this concept let us contrast the desire for leadership with the trait of kindness. We all possess the faculty of kindness, but it might take some cultivating to help this trait come to the surface. Generally, **acts** of kindness help the person experience feelings of kindness. The same is true for all other faculties with the exception of kingship.

The faculty of kingship is so deeply rooted and “encapsulated” in the soul of the person who is capable of being a king that it requires tremendous efforts on the part of the nation to arouse the desire in him to be their leader; for the encapsulated power to break out of its shell. This potential of leadership is so removed from one’s consciousness that the **true** leader (as opposed to the power hungry political figures throughout history) may have no inkling that he is capable of and destined to be a leader.

Moses, King Saul and other Biblical and post-Biblical leaders were perfect examples of this reluctance to become a leader, not just because of their humility, but because it is the most elusive human potential.

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Moses, of course, had to be pressured by G-d Himself to become the leader of the Jewish nation. Moses could not fathom that he was the greatest of all Jewish leaders of all times!

Long Live the King!

Only the nation's heartfelt exclamation of "Yechi HaMelech-Long Live the King" and their continued devotion to him, can elicit the trait of kingship from its unconscious state. Thus, the expression, "there is no king without a nation." The nation actually creates the king.

Since the king is totally dependent on the nation for his very existence as a king, it follows, that when the people are flawed, it has a direct effect on their leader; it diminishes him. And conversely, when the king's stature is diminished, it hurts the people because there is arguably no greater connection between people than the one of a true leader and his followers.

The more the people accept the king as their leader, the more they follow his dictates—assuming that he is a righteous king—the more his stature is raised and the higher he can go,

which, in turn elevates the level of the people as well.

The Spark of Moshiach

Of all the kings that Judaism speaks of, the most prominent one is, of course, Moshiach. Moshiach is not a dictator who will crush us, but one who will enable us to reveal all of our positive qualities. Moshiach helps us become leaders and kings of our own lives and to help inspire others as well.

If our devotion to a king is what makes him our king and reinforces our relationship with him, then it is certainly true about Moshiach. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that, in fact, every one of us possesses a spark of Moshiach within.

When we ignite our spark of Moshiach, the general Moshiach is then empowered to express his G-d given ability and mission to become our king and liberate us from exile.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

WHO'S GOING TO HEAVEN?

One of the salient negative features of exile is the lack of sensitivity to G-d and others.

Passover, the Holiday of liberation bans Chometz the symbol of an inflated ego because the source of exile is insensitivity that is generated by an inflated ego.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

WHO'S GOING TO HEAVEN?

Open the Gates for those who Made Amends

Does one who has committed serious crimes go to Heaven? Recently, there has been much talk about what it takes for one who has committed heinous crimes to procure forgiveness from G-d. The answer can be found at the end of this week's Parsha:

“If a soul shall sin and be unfaithful to G-d, by denying that he has his friend's deposit, or denying a partnership, or if he has stolen or withheld wages from his friend. Or if he had found a lost article and denies it etc. When it will come to pass that he [will acknowledge] that he has sinned and that he is guilty, he shall return the stolen goods that he has stolen etc.”

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In addition to compensating the victim, the Torah adds the requirement to bring a sacrifice to G-d.

From this we see how the process of making amends requires that one first make amends to the person he has wronged and then, and only then does he attempt to procure G-d's forgiveness.

This approach is echoed in the words of the Mishnah:

“Sins that are between man and his fellow man, Yom Kippur does not atone for until he pacifies his fellow [whom he has wronged].”

Why Can't G-d Forgive?

One is entitled to ask, what is the reason for the requirement of asking one's fellow for forgiveness? Why can't we go straight to G-d and ask Him for forgiveness? After all, it is G-d who commanded us to treat the other properly. When we violate that we are essentially going against G-d. Why can't we then just deal with Him?

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There are several explanations that have been given.

Continuous Pain

First, when we cause someone pain and we do not ask that person for forgiveness, we are actually continuing to contribute to the other person's pain. Only sincere requests for forgiveness from the one we have wronged can help the victim to begin to heal. As long as the pain persists because of our actions or our inaction, we have an obligation to stop it by sincerely apologizing.

Hence asking for forgiveness is not just to erase the past; it is also to prevent pain in the future.

To ask G-d for forgiveness and not the hurt party is to show that we are really not contrite about what we did wrong. Otherwise, why would we want the hurt party to feel pain now? If it was wrong to cause one pain it is equally wrong to not do anything to help the person be relieved of their pain.

A half-hearted request for forgiveness—by asking G-d for forgiveness but forgetting to

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pacify the victim—is much like the child who threatened his friend he had just punched in the nose: “If you don’t forgive me, I’ll punch you again...”

Sensitizing

Second, when G-d commanded us to treat our fellow properly, it was His intention that we do so not only because G-d said so, but also because G-d wants us to develop a sincere concern for the other. As Maimonides states that a person who desists from hurting another **only** because G-d said so, is morally inferior to one who is repulsed at the thought of hurting another.

While it is true, that G-d wants us to perform all of the Mitzvot — including the man-to-man ones — because, they are G-d given — nevertheless, G-d also wants us to care for and feel the pain of the other.

Were we not required to ask forgiveness from the person we have hurt, it would have suggested that G-d does not really want us to care about the pain of that individual. Even if we express remorse to G-d, it would not

indicate that we have cultivated the sensitivity that the man-to-man obligations require.

Making Amends for Galus Mentality

As we enter into the Season of Our Liberation—as the Holiday of Passover is called—and as we ready ourselves for the ultimate liberation through Moshiach, we must make the proper amends for the past by detaching ourselves from the “anti-liberation” mindset.

Every minute we remain in Galus/exile we cause ourselves and others untold suffering. And just as important it is to make amends to others when we hurt them physically or offended them, so too is it crucial that we make amends to those whom we have hurt by virtue of the continuing exile.

And the way to make amends for the exile is to identify the exile mentality and to live our lives in direct opposition to that mentality.

Our Sages tell us that when Moses heard the way some Jews spoke ill of the others, he wondered whether G-d would liberate a people

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who do not have a sense of kinship for the other. Similarly, the Talmud attributes the senseless hatred that prevailed in those days, as the root cause of the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile.

Much has been written about the slave-mentality our ancestors had when they left Egypt. After thousands of years in exile we have also adopted a Galus mentality. One aspect of Galus is the desensitization process it engendered. The worst expression of this insensitivity is the senseless hatred that our sages implicated as the primary cause for the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile.

To be worthy of liberation, thus, we have to work on developing proper sensitivity to each other and to not be content with some perfunctory expression of remorse when we hurt the other. At the same time we have to recognize that we cannot be sensitive to someone if we continue to cause them pain. As long as we do not counter the Galus and its mentality we are in effect embracing exile and perpetuating the insensitivity and pain.

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A Kosher Passover

The traditional greeting for Passover is: *Chag kasher v'sameiach*-Have a Kosher and Happy Passover. The simple meaning of kosher in relation to Passover is to get rid of the *chometz*, the leavening and all products that contain leavening.

To ensure that the holiday is truly **Kosher**, in all senses of the word, one must get rid of not only the physical *chometz* (leaven) but also the *chometz*-arrogance that prevents us from truly making amends for the pain we cause others.

Senseless hatred, the very cause and characterization of exile is rooted in an inflated ego. When we are obsessed with ourselves we cannot tolerate the existence of another. Getting rid of the inflated *chometz* is thus the means through which we get rid of Galus.

A Happy Passover

In addition to the need for a kosher Passover to ensure Redemption we also need to have a “happy” Passover. Going out of exile requires joy. Depression and lack of life and enthusiasm

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are also characteristics of exile. To get out of exile, we must generate feelings of joy.

However, as Maimonides notes, to truly experience joy we must also make others happy, for true joy is experienced only when it is shared by all.

In the traditional greeting the word kosher appears before the word happy. To truly experience joy one must get rid of the inflated ego. As long as one is preoccupied with his or her own needs and interests, one cannot experience true joy. There is never enough to satisfy the appetite of the person driven by ego and self-interest.

By having a kosher Passover—getting rid of the *chometz*—one can then have a joyous Passover. The absence of ego enables us to feel the joy and to share it with others, which enhances the joy. And it is this joy that serves as the catalyst to get out of exile.

Having a kosher and happy Passover will surely lead us to the time when all *chometz*—symbolically speaking—will be removed, with eternal joy prevailing.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

TESTIFY!

Our role is to testify about G-d.

**Not just about G-d as a Creator and sustainer
of life.**

And not just as a Supernatural force.

Those are bit G-d's attributes.

**We are empowered through our Mitzvos to
testify about G-d's Essence.**

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

TESTIFY!

A Love Affair

Many of the commandments recorded in the book of Vayikra-Leviticus, and more specifically, in this week's parsha, revolve around the offerings the Jews were required to bring to the Bais Hamikdash.

The name of the book, as well as its opening parsha, is *Vayikra*, which simply means "And He called." It is somewhat puzzling that a book should be given such a non-descript and unexciting name such as, "And He called"!

Without explicitly asking the question, Rashi, the principal Torah commentator, explains that this is a term of endearment. Indeed, the entire book of *Vayikra*, particularly the section that deals with the *korbanos*-sacrifices, is about our love affair with G-d. The word *korban* actually

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connotes the idea of closeness and intimacy. When one offered a korban and it was accepted by G-d, it demonstrated the mutually close and intimate relationship between G-d and us.

With this premise in mind, we must try to understand how it applies to a commandment that appears at the end of the parsha:

“If a person sins... and he does not testify... he will bear (the consequences of) his sin.”

This verse, as it is understood by our Oral Tradition (later transcribed in the Talmud), refers to a case where there is a monetary dispute. The Torah commands witnesses that they must testify on behalf of a litigant.

Indeed, according to the Midrashic-legal work, *Toras Kohanim* (*Parshas Kedoshim*), cited by Rambam in his *Sefer HaMitzvos* (Negative commandment # 297), one who refuses to testify on behalf of another, even in monetary matters, also violates another commandant: “Do not stand idly by the blood of your fellow.”

How does this commandment to testify relate to G-d’s love affair with the Jewish people? At best, it states an obligation to assist our fellow, and is

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one of many ways through which we fulfill the command to “Love your fellow as yourself.” How does it relate to our intimate relationship with G-d, which the name *Vayikra* implies?

“You are My Witnesses”

The concept of testifying for another is rooted in a spiritual concept of testimony. The prophet Isaiah (43:12) describes G-d’s declaration to the Jewish people: “You are My witnesses.”

From their genesis through all of their long, arduous, twisting and glorious history, the Jewish people themselves were the greatest testimony to G-d’s presence; His greatness, might and awesomeness. The Jewish people were delivered from Egyptian slavery by the Ten Plagues and the Splitting of the Red Sea, which testified to G-d’s absolute control over His world. The subsequent miracles in the desert, the conquest of the Land of Israel and the presence of the Bais Hamikdash in Jerusalem implanted G-d in the consciousness of humanity.

When the Jews exhibited the highest moral behavior, it impressed upon the nations of the

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world that the Jewish people were guided by a just and righteous G-d.

And then there were the miracles the Jewish people experienced in the Diaspora such as Purim, where G-d's hand was evident in saving the Jewish people from certain annihilation.

Finding G-d in Hiding

On the other side of the coin, there were times in our history where G-d hid His face. However, even in such situations G-d's light still shined through the cracks. When the Torah predicts the terrible events to befall the Jews in the future, it introduces it with the words, "I will indeed hide My face." Even when G-d hid His face, His presence was revealed by the Jews, who stubbornly refused to give up their faith in Him.

While we have no right to judge the reactions of those Holocaust survivors whose faith was challenged so severely, we must marvel and deeply admire the many other Holocaust survivors who did not lose their faith. Even as they went to certain death, many declared "Shema Yisrael," affirming their belief in one G-

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d, and *Ani Ma'amin*-I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach!

Throughout our history, we have seen the Light in the darkness. Whether it was in the terrible darkness of the Holocaust or the Soviet Gulag, countless Jews remained faithful to Judaism and testified to the world that there is one G-d!

Revealing the Hidden

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the Alter Rebbe, probes more deeply into the Jewish people's role as witnesses to G-d.

A witness is not needed for something that is public knowledge. Even something that is not presently known to the public, but will in due course become known, does not require formal testimony to establish its veracity. The idea of a witness is to reveal something that is hidden from us and without whom it will never become known.

Similarly, the role of the Jewish people as G-d's witnesses is to reveal G-d's existence even within worldly matters where He is hidden. The very word "world" in Hebrew is *olam* and is

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cognate to *he'lem*-concealment, because nature, by definition, is a smokescreen for G-d. It was Divine design to keep G-d hidden, to challenge us to discover that there is nothing outside of G-d's dominion and, indeed, that there is nothing – period - outside of G-d.

Three Dimensions of G-dly Knowledge

The Rebbe, in one of his discourses, gives us an even deeper understanding of what it means for us to be G-d's witnesses, based on the premise that a witness is there to reveal something that is utterly concealed.

Even when we speak about revealing G-d's presence, there are several levels of meaning. There is an aspect of G-d embedded within Creation that we do not see. However, simple logic dictates that there must be a life-force that creates and gives life to everything.

Upon deeper reflection, we come to the realization that the power G-d uses to create cannot be simply the power that is vested within and therefore related to the Creation. There must be a transcendent G-dly force that is beyond the Creation. This power cannot be

fathomed the way the first level can, but can be arrived at by deductive reasoning. These two levels are analogous to a witness who testifies about something that is already public knowledge or which will inevitably become public knowledge, respectively.

For these manifestations of G-d to be accessible we do not need our power of testimony. That power is reserved for the very Essence of G-d, which is utterly and entirely inscrutable and totally out of the realm of the world's consciousness and cannot, with conventional intellectual resources, ever be revealed.

Only the Jewish nation was blessed and endowed with the power to reveal G-d's Essence through the observance of the Mitzvos-commandments known as *Edos*-testimonies. These are the Mitzvos such as the Shabbos, Holidays, Tefilin, etc., that are G-d's testimonies.

Three Stages of History

In a more general sense, our history can perhaps be divided into three stages, which correspond to the three levels of testimony:

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In the first stage, when G-d was palpable through miracles, prophecy and the Bais Hamikdash, we were witnesses in a relative sense. We pointed our fingers and declared: "This is My G-d and I will glorify Him." Our actions were not so necessary to see G-d's Hand; G-d made His presence clear through His actions. We did our part, but that is not the true meaning of testimony.

Then G-d hid His face in our current period of exile, which has lasted for almost two millennia. That is when it was crucial for us to testify to G-d's presence, even when it appeared that He was absent. We responded admirably to this challenge.

However, the main challenge is to discover and testify about G-d's very Essence. That challenge was entrusted to our generation. As the Rebbe often stated, we are the "bridge" generation between Galus and Geulah. Moshiach, who ushers in the Redemption, and every Jew who possesses a spark of Moshiach, is given the task, specifically in this transitional period, to reveal G-d's very Essence from its elusive state of concealment.

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No other generation has been given that power. It was entrusted to us exclusively because, as it appears from the Rebbe's words, our souls were chosen to be the ones to usher in the Messianic Age.

We can now understand how the affirmative commandment to give testimony is connected to the endearing expression of *Vayikra*.

Parallel Testimonies

When we testify for another we are, metaphorically speaking, invoking our power to testify about G-d. Moreover, the very power our testimony possesses to uncover the truth about a financial matter, for example, derives from the Divine power we were endowed with to reveal the most hidden aspects of the Divine and usher in the Age of Redemption when all of the hidden G-dly matters will be fully revealed. In the words of Maimonides' concluding words of his Mishneh Torah:

“In that era, there will be neither famine, nor war... for good will flow in abundance... The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d.

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Therefore, the Jews will be great sages and know hidden matters, attaining the knowledge of their Creator to the [full extent of] human potential as it is written, 'For the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover up the ocean bed.' "

It seems that Rambam is alluding to and enumerating all three levels:

"The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d,"

This presumably refers to the Divine inherent within and accessible to the world and will therefore be known and understood by all peoples.

"Therefore, the Jews will be great sages"

This appears to be a reference to knowing the trans-worldly energies of G-d that are not easily accessible to all, and,

"...know hidden matters, attaining the knowledge of their Creator to the [full extent of] human potential"

This seems to refer to those matters that are presently hidden. They too will be revealed

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within the confines of the human mind. We will then realize the full meaning of being G-d's witnesses.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN
AND HE CALLED, AND
HE CALLED, AND HE
CALLED

**G-d is constantly calling us with love. Our ears
must be receptive to hear that call.**

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

AND HE CALLED, AND HE CALLED, AND HE CALLED

Vayikra: The Opening Word

This week's parsha, which is the first parsha of the third book of the Torah known as Leviticus is actually named Vayikra because it is the opening word of the parsha. In Jewish sources the entire book of Leviticus is also referred to as the Book of Vayikra because of its opening word. It is obvious that the name Vayikra is an extremely important word that teaches us a crucial lesson that relates to the entire book that is devoted to the theme of holiness and goodness.

Vayikra is translated as: "And He called." It is a reference to the manner in which G-d would communicate the teachings of Torah to Moses. As a sign of His affection for him, Rashi explains, G-d would call Moses before each one of his communications with him. Calling

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someone before addressing them is a sign that you are not compelled to speak to them and that your communication with the other is not a reluctant one. On the contrary, the speaker enjoys and savors his communication with his interlocutor.

Rashi contrasts this affectionate introduction to Moses with the way G-d communicated with the heathen and vile prophet Bilam. There the Torah uses the word *Vayikar* which translates as “He chanced on him,” suggesting that his communication with Bilam was highly undesirable.

Rashi, however, adds another point. Notwithstanding the fact that the reference to G-d calling Moses before speaking to him is mentioned only once here at the beginning of the book of Leviticus, nevertheless, Rashi asserts, G-d did it for each and every time He communicated with Moses.

The question is why. Why did G-d have to call him repeatedly? To make the case that Moses was beloved to G-d it would have sufficed for Him to do it once.

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Pre-Natal Oaths

One answer is based on the way we must view our status and relationship with G-d. The Talmud states that before we are born an oath is administered to us. This oath consists of two parts: The first is:

“Be righteous and do not be wicked.”

The second part states:

“Even if the entire world says to you that you are righteous, you shall still regard yourself as if you are wicked.”

At first glance, the second part of the oath is incomprehensible. First, why should we disregard all of the positive testimony of others? And second, why would it be desirable to think of oneself as a wicked person? Wouldn't that lead to depression and other undesirable consequences?

“As if...”

The Chassidic classic Tanya explains that if we examine the terminology of that Talmudic passage we will see that it does not say that we should regard ourselves as wicked. Rather it

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says that we should regard ourselves “as if” we were wicked, which suggests that we must incorporate one aspect of the experience of a wicked person. This means that just as a wicked person has to struggle with evil, so too, do most righteous people have to struggle with evil. And while many righteous people will prevail over their evil impulses they must never let their guard down lest they will succumb to a sudden surge of evil that may have been suppressed. Since they think they are righteous and have no problem with evil they will not be prepared for that sudden confrontation with evil that will cause them to regress.

The fact that the “entire world” considers one to be a righteous person who has vanquished all his or her evil does not prove that it is indeed true. The appearance of righteousness may belie one’s embedded evil that can awaken from its slumber at any time and make us vulnerable.

There is one exception to the rule of not believing when others tell us that we are completely righteous. When G-d tells you that you are righteous, you can justifiably assume that you are indeed completely righteous. After all, G-d surely knows what is in one’s heart and

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if He intimates that you are good and holy it is surely true. Thus when G-d called out to Moses affectionately before he addressed him, Moses could have very easily and correctly concluded that G-d regarded him as a truly and inherently righteous person.

Moses' Humility

However—and this is where we see Moses' unique humility expressed—the second after G-d showed him the sign of affection, compelling Moses to conclude that he was indeed righteous, he did not allow that thought to linger. He quickly banished the thought from his mind and said to himself that even if he was righteous in the past—for that he could not deny—it did not mean that he was righteous in the present.

G-d therefore repeated His calls of affection to continually reinforce His high regard for Moses. And Moses, despite his accomplishments for which he was lauded by G-d, never rested on his laurels. He felt that he had to start from scratch.

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Thus each and every time G-d spoke to him He called out to him (“Vayikra”) with love to reinforce His high regard for him. And after every time G-d did that Moses still regarded himself to be no different from anyone else. It did not make him arrogant and condescending and it did not make him want to slow down in his efforts to serve G-d and humanity.

In other words, Moses’ “default” consideration of himself was that he was ordinary. It took G-d’s calling him with love to make him realize his exalted position, which he used only as an inspiration to continue to please G-d..

G-d’s Call to Us

The application of this analysis to our lives is that in a certain sense we are all like Moses. As the Ba’al Shem Tov taught, every Jew possesses a spark of Moses’ soul. And just as G-d called out to Moses to show His affection for him so too G-d calls out to each and every one of us to show us how much He loves us and has high regard for us. However, we must never allow this realization to go to our heads. Our default

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position has to be that we have to be prepared to prove ourselves each and every day.

And lest we would think that we are incapable of pleasing G-d by doing what is right, the memory we have of the last time He called out to the Moses within us should inspire us to repeat our goodness and righteousness without the attendant sense of superiority over others.

G-d Calling out to Us “I want to Redeem You”

The same idea can be applied to our preparations for the Messianic Age. We must always heed the call of G-d to us that expresses His love for us and for all that we have done in the past. And this love, while not always apparent to us, is certainly there and finds expression in our lives from time to time. Based on this love, we are confident that He will imminently bring about the promised Redemption when His love will shine brightly perpetually.

However, we must also emulate Moses, who despite hearing repeatedly G-d's loving call to him, he did not allow that memory to cause him to retire spiritually. On the contrary,

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knowing G-d's love for us should inspire us to rededicated action until we bring Moshiach and beyond.

ESSAY NINETEEN

SELFLESS-SELFISHNESS

The myth is that altruism negates looking for reward.

The truth is that seeking reward for the right reason is the most complete way of serving G-d.

ESSAY NINETEEN

SELFLESS-SELFISHNESS

Why is a Peace Offering Called a Peace Offering?

The opening parsha of the Book of Leviticus/Vayikra discusses the various sacrifices the Jews were commanded to offer in the Sanctuary. One sacrifice is called an *Olah*, a burnt offering, It was so called because all of it had to be consumed on the Altar. A second offering was called *Shelamim*, which means a peace offering. It was divided up into three parts. Some of it was burnt on the Altar, some of it was given to the Kohain-Priest, and some of it was eaten by the person who dedicated it.

According to Rashi the reason it is called a peace offering is precisely because it was shared by all three “parties” to the offering. It therefore introduced peace and harmony between G-d to Whom it was offered, and the one who offered the sacrifice, as well as peace between the Jew

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who offered the sacrifice and the Priests who were instrumental in the ritual of the sacrifice.

The “Whole” Offering

The following is another approach as to why it is called a *Shelamim* based on the teachings of the Chassidic work, *Panim Yafos*. According to this approach, the word Shelamim is related to the word “whole.” Only the Shelamim can be considered a whole offering.

What is it about the Shelamim that makes it more whole than the burnt offering? At first glance one could argue that the reverse is true. The burnt offering was more whole because there was no division in it. All of it was dedicated to one cause. It was burnt in its entirety as opposed to the Shelamim that was divided into three parts and consumed by three distinct “parties,” each of whom had a different role.

A Mitzvah to Receive G-d’s Reward!

To understand the meaning of wholeness in relation to G-d—which can then be applied to

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us who were created in G-d's image and possess a G-dly soul—we must preface the words of the Mishnah in Ethics of the Fathers:

“One should not be like a servant who serves the master with the intention of receiving a reward.”

The Hebrew word for reward is usually *s'char*, Yet, in the foregoing citation from the Mishnah it uses the word *pras*, which, when translated literally, means a piece, or half of a whole thing.

In other words there are two different attitudes towards the rewards we receive for our good behavior: One is *s'char* which is positive and the other is *pras* which has negative connotations. The former is considered whole, whereas the latter is not.

Panim Yafos explains that there is really nothing wrong if one serves G-d with the expectation of receiving a reward, provided the reason we want to receive the reward is to please G-d Who loves to give. Inasmuch as G-d has a “passion” to give, it is G-d's greatest joy when we serve Him in ways that generate reward for us. Then our Mitzvah is complete. Not only have we served G-d by observing His

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commandments, but, moreover, we have given Him a double source of satisfaction, because we gave Him the opportunity to reward us and bestow His kindness upon us.

This explains another saying of our Sages in Ethics of the Fathers that “the reward for a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah” in a novel way:

Receiving a reward for our Mitzvot is in and of itself a Mitzvah because it generates G-d’s attribute of kindness and unleashes tremendous forces of Divine delight and pleasure.

However, the reward is complete only when our desire to receive reward is motivated by a desire to fulfill G-d’s will that we be rewarded and not for our own selfish reasons. It is a Mitzvah to receive a reward if it is intended to give G-d the opportunity and satisfaction of being a Giver. If it is done for that reason it is a complete form of reward; not only to we benefit, but G-d benefits as well, so to speak.

This then is the difference between a reward/*s’chr* and a *pras*. Receiving a reward is understood as a desire to make it possible for G-d to be a Giver, whereas the desire for a *pras* is the desire for oneself, which makes the

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reward incomplete and defective; it is only a *pras*, a truncated part of something whole.

A One-Way Street

We can now understand why the Shelamim is the complete offering as opposed to the burnt offering. The burnt offering, while it is totally consumed on the Altar—and it therefore demonstrates one's total devotion to G-d—is actually missing an important component. It is a one way street, albeit going in the right direction. But the ultimate joy that G-d derives from us is when we allow Him to reciprocate for our actions and give us a reward.

When we bring the Shelamim offering—while it is also dedicated to G-d, and part of it was actually burnt on His Altar—it nevertheless is also consumed by the Kohanim as well as by the owner of the sacrifice. This gives G-d complete satisfaction because not only have we demonstrated our own devotion to G-d and our willingness to sacrifice for Him it also gives Him the satisfaction that we are His beneficiaries. It gives G-d immense joy, as it were, that we are sitting as invited guests at His royal table. The

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joy of hosting is no less powerful than the joy of knowing someone is a loyal subject.

Giving and Receiving Unselfishly

The Shelamim offering expresses the ideal of being a giver and a recipient in an unselfish way. One can give for ulterior motives and one can certainly receive for selfish reasons. But when one's giving and receiving are both motivated by a genuine desire to give G-d not only our offering to Him but to "enable" Him to give us something in return—that is the most complete exercise in serving G-d.

When we do any Mitzvah we should focus on the dual nature of the Shelmaim. To be sure, we should do the Mitzvah because G-d so desires. But we should also do the Mitzvah so that G-d could reciprocate and give us what He wants to give.

Doing a Mitzvah to Bring Moshiach

Of all the things that G-d would love to give us is an end to pain and suffering; an end to the bitter exile we have been in since the

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destruction of the Second temple close to 2,000 years ago.

When we do a Mitzvah just for the sake of doing G-d's will, that is great. It is the equivalent of a burnt offering. However, what is even greater is when we do a Mitzvah so that G-d will hasten the coming of Moshiach and usher in the true and complete Redemption and give us what He wants to give more than anything else. Contrary to the popular misconception that that would be compromising the purity and integrity of the Mitzvah, according to Panim Yafos it would make the Mitzvah even more complete.

The Whole and Half Matzah

As we approach the Festival of Passover, there is a connection between what has been explained here and the tradition to have two whole Matzos at the Seder and a Matzah that we break into two.

It may be suggested, that these two forms of Matzah are needed on Passover because Passover comprises two themes, the theme of

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bondage and incompleteness and the theme of liberation and wholeness.

On the one hand, the whole Matzos signify that we want our Seder to be complete; we want G-d to feel good that He is able to liberate us and give us all of our needs. But we must also have a broken Matzah, a “poor person’s meal,” because it is a reminder that in exile G-d receives no satisfaction from the fact that it was frequently a one way street; we made the sacrifices and we still remained in exile.

Throughout our exile we were in effect bringing burnt offerings. But with the Exodus from Egypt—the forerunner of the future Redemption—we also need whole Matzos, the most complete experience where we give G-d and G-d gives us what we want and desperately need—the final Redemption through Moshiach.

ESSAY TWENTY

HEADS FIRST!

Leaders must first have the requisite Torah knowledge before they engage in leadership.

The qualifications for Moshiach, the ultimate leader, is his mastery of Torah

ESSAY TWENTY

HEADS FIRST!

Sin offering and Burnt Offering: Which comes First?

The book of Vayikra-Leviticus that we commence reading this week—and the parsha that carries the same name—deals primarily with the various offerings that one would bring to the Temple. Some of these offerings were intended as atonements for certain transgressions that were committed unwittingly.

In some instances one would bring two different offerings: one was a *chata*-sin offering and the other an *olah*-a burnt offering. The difference between them was that the sin offering—that was partially burnt on the altar and partially eaten by the *Kohain*-Priest—was to help the person atone for the actual commission of a sin, while the burnt offering—that was entirely consumed by the fire of the Altar—was intended as a “gift” to “pacify” G-d

and restore the relationship between the Jew who sinned and G-d to its original position.

The Exception of Idolatry

When the Torah discusses these two offerings it makes a point of emphasizing that the *chatas*-sin offering was always offered **before** the *olah*-burnt offering. However, the Talmud notes that there is one exception to this general rule. When an offering is brought for the sin of idol worship the order is reversed. First a burnt offering is brought and then a sin offering!

The question that arises here is why the Torah reverses the order of the two offerings exclusively with regard to idolatry? Logic dictates that we must first atone for the commission of the actual crime before the burnt offering, which is merely a gesture. Wouldn't it be foolish to send your enemy flowers before working things out with him or her? Normally, one would work things out and then to restore the relationship to its original position we make a gesture. Why would we reverse that order?

This matter is actually much more problematic considering the fact that the one sin where this exception is made is the most serious sin of idol worship. Why would this most serious transgression not require atoning first for the actual sin before making a “gesture?”

The Sin of the Sanhedrin

Upon closer examination we will see that this anomaly applies specifically to a case where the members of the Sanhedrin erred and ruled that a certain form of idol worship is permissible. As a result the Jewish people mistakenly engaged in an idolatrous practice.

The problem here is not idolatry in its literal sense. Obviously, the Sanhedrin would be well aware that believing in other gods is a most serious breach of faith in the one G-d, the very foundation of Judaism!

We must therefore assume that they did not permit this form of worship to allow the people to express a belief in another god, G-d forbid. Their erroneous ruling “merely” represented an error in judgment on their part, thinking that an empty gesture to an idol one does not

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believe in would be meaningless and therefore innocuous.

Twin Sin

One scenario where this could have happened, we might suggest, is one in which a question posed to them as to whether it would be permitted to stage a play in which the actor was engaged in an idolatrous act, such as bowing down to an idol. The Sanhedrin erroneously ruled that since it is only an act, it did not represent a breach of faith.

In this situation there are actually two distinct sins committed by the judges of the Sanhedrin for which two forms of atonement were necessary:

The first sin is their faulty judgment. That the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people can so distort Jewish law as to permit an idolatrous act under any circumstances was a sign that their whole thought process was warped. It was now their responsibility to atone for the perverse way of **thinking** that led to this degenerate situation.

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Second: They bore the responsibility for so many Jews who engaged in Judaism's most serious transgression and the spiritual harm it caused. And for this they must obviously also atone.

Action versus Intent

We can now understand why, in this scenario, the burnt offering preceded the sin offering.

The Talmud tells us that there is another salient difference between the sin offering and the burn offering with regard to their atonement potentials. The sin offering atones for one's sinful **actions**, whereas the burnt offering atones for one's sinful **thoughts**.

We can now understand why with respect to idolatry is the general order reversed and we bring the burn offering first and then the sin offering.

The answer is now clear: When a person sins his or her act is a composite of an action and a thought that accompanies it. Generally, the act is a more severe problem than the thought that accompanies it.

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To illustrate: To hit someone is much worse than to harboring a desire to hit someone. We therefore bring the sin offering first and then we bring the burnt offering. First we deal with the damaging **behavior** and then the erroneous **thought** that accompanied the action.

However, with respect to the Sanhedrin that erred in its ruling concerning an idolatrous practice we must reverse the order of the sacrifices. This can be explained several ways:

When we analyze the role of the Sanhedrin in this matter it is clear that the two transgressions for which they must atone are two **independent** ones. First, it is their faulty **judgment and thought** process that corrupted the Torah. Second, they are also responsible for the idolatrous **actions** of the nation. And since their erroneous thought process preceded the actions of the people—and is independent of it, for they could have misinterpreted the Torah and not cause anyone to sin—they would therefore first bring the burnt offering which is dedicated to atone primarily for thoughts.

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In addition, when reflecting on the degree of seriousness of these two sins, one can argue that the former—erroneous ruling of the Sanhedrin—is a more serious and damaging breach of Judaism than the actions of the masses that they inspired.

To explain:

Two Roles of the Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin assumed two intertwined roles: They were the heads and brains of the people who were responsible for interpreting the Torah. Indeed, as Maimonides writes, they were the very embodiment of Torah inasmuch as they represented the transmission and interpretation of the Oral Torah from one generation to the next. When they distorted the Torah so egregiously—and their role as heads was tainted—they undermined the integrity of the entire Torah.

The Sanhedrin also assumed a second role. They were also the leaders who represented the entire Jewish nation and whose job it was to guide and inspire the people and not sit in their ivory towers (read: judicial chambers) as do the

justices in most secular societies. And when they erred, causing the people to transgress, they caused great harm to the people they represented. Instead of lifting up the people they brought them down.

By bringing the burnt offering first they were addressing their role as **heads** first, and then their role of leaders. Before a Jewish leader can lead, his Torah credentials must be impeccable. One cannot be a leader—all good intentions notwithstanding—without being firmly anchored in the Torah.

Moshiach's Credentials

When Maimonides discusses the qualifications of the ultimate leader, the Moshiach who will usher in the final Redemption he writes that he must be a leader who is “steeped in Torah study and scrupulously committed to all of its precepts” who then influences the people to follow in the path of Torah, and only after that does he usher in the final era of Redemption.

The reason for highlighting this qualification is that Moshiach's role and objective is not to perform miracles (though he might very well do

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so). His primary role and objective is to restore the Torah to the preeminent position it occupied in Biblical times and further enhance its status and relevance to society.

If his objective is to strengthen Torah, he must, first and foremost, be a leader who personifies Torah, and who will not err the way the Sanhedrin might have (theoretically speaking, for there is no evidence that any Sanhedrin actually ruled that any form of idolatry is permitted under any circumstances) in the past.

And since the Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that we all possess a spark of Moshiach, our role in these auspicious times as we stand ready to enter into the Messianic Age is to strengthen our identification with the pure teachings of the Torah, so our heads and thought processes are clear.

When we actualize our spark of Moshiach through Torah study—and especially through the teachings of the Torah concerning Moshiach and the Age of Redemption—we will hasten the unfolding of this process. But we must remember that heads first!

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

SEEING THE LIGHT IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

**One of the hallmarks of the Messianic Age is it
will take us out of darkness; out of our
insecurities.**

It will then enable us to see the other.

**Living with Moshiach is to see the hand of G-d
and the clarity that brings.**

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

SEEING THE LIGHT IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

A Puzzling Midrash

A significant portion of the third book of the Torah—Leviticus—deals with sacrifices brought as atonement for sin. At the end of this week's parsha, the Torah states:

If a person sins, betraying G-d by falsely denying to his fellow concerning a deposit, or money given in hand, or an object taken by robbery, or he withheld funds from his fellow or he found a lost article and he denied it and swore falsely regarding any one of all these cases whereby a man may sin... he shall return the article which he had robbed... regarding which he had sworn falsely, he shall pay it with its principal, adding its fifths to it... He shall then bring his guilt offering to G-d...

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There is a puzzling and enigmatic comment in the Midrash on this verse:

This is what the Torah means when it says, “A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.”

What possible connection is there between a person swearing falsely about money and a new king in Egypt?

Denial in the Country of de-Nile

To answer this question we have to discuss the issue of denial in Egypt. (No, not “de-Nile”). Rashi cites two opinions in the Talmud concerning the meaning of “a new king” in our verse. One opinion takes it literally: a new king who did not know Joseph. The other opinion maintains that it was the same Pharaoh but now he acted as if he did not know Joseph. He was in denial of Joseph’s role in saving Egypt from total devastation due to the seven years of famine that he predicted.

The first opinion may be more faithful to the literal meaning of the word “new,” but the second view is more plausible. The Midrash

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argues that if this was truly a new king, why is there no mention in the Torah that the old king died and a new king ascended to the throne?

According to the second view the Torah seeks here to underscore the wickedness of Pharaoh. Had this been a truly new king, he would have been guilty of enslaving the Jewish people. But according to the second view Pharaoh was far more evil because he enslaved his benefactors. It was the height of denial and ingratitude.

We can now understand the connection to our verse in Leviticus. The crimes mentioned here all involve denial that one owes money to another. And in several of the cases the denial also involves denial of the other person's kindness, as in the case of a loan or work that was done for the benefit of the denier. Like the case of Pharaoh, here the denial is not only an act of dishonesty; it is also a radical example of ingratitude.

When a person engages in denial on some level he must know that he is emulating Pharaoh, the personification of exile and the exile mentality. Every time we deny G-d's role in our lives or the role of others we should realize that it is a

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sign we are still trapped in a spiritual and internal exile, akin to being slaves to Pharaoh.

And in this season as we near Passover, the Festival of Liberation, it behooves us to focus on liberating ourselves from denial and ingratitude.

The Source of Denial

Why, we must ask, do people engage in denial?

Children will reflexively deny guilt when confronted with an embarrassing situation.

This denial syndrome actually began with the first human being who denied guilt. When Adam partook of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge he blamed it on Eve. In turn, Eve blamed it on the serpent. Their son, Cain, responded in like manner to G-d's inquiry about Abel with the words, "I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?"

Why is denial so deeply ingrained in us?

The Torah answers the question in a later episode. When G-d asks why Sarah laughed when she heard from the angels, disguised as human travelers, that she would bear a child at the age of 90, the Torah states that "Sarah

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denied it, saying, ‘I didn’t laugh **because she was afraid.**”

From this we see that fear impels people to deny wrongdoing.

But why would one deny the **favours** received from another? Why deny and be guilty of not only lying but also of ingratitude?

For example, Adam, when denying his guilt, also engaged in an act of ingratitude. He tells G-d, “The woman whom You gave me, gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Rashi comments, “Here he denied G-d’s generosity.” Not only did he deny that he was responsible for partaking of the forbidden fruit because Eve gave it to him; he also blamed G-d for giving him Eve, thus showing ingratitude to G-d for having been given a wife in the first place.

From this we gather that fear can lead to denial even when it will also display a lack of appreciation and gratitude to others. How and why does fear cause both denial and a lack of gratitude?

Insecurity

The people's fear derives from their need for validation. Anything that diminishes us threatens our sense of self. We cannot tolerate compromising our image in the eyes of others. If we had healthy self-esteem, which comes from the realization that we possess a G-dly soul and performance of many Mitzvos, we would not feel our self worth being diminished by admitting guilt. On the contrary, once we admit guilt we can bounce back from our diminished position through teshuva.

Sadly, most people do not have a healthy sense of self. Instead, they focus on the physical and emotional layers of their personalities and achievements and not on the G-dly. Anything that will further erode their fragile sense of self could be devastating to them. So they pick the route that seems to offer the least amount of pain, deny their guilt and even deny the good they have received from others.

Moreover, people who have fragile egos and lack authentic self-esteem, feel even smaller when they realize that they got what they have from someone else. This triggers denial of the

other's contributions to them and focuses instead on the way the other might have hurt them. If one cannot outright deny the other's role, the next best thing is to accuse him of causing the sin in the first place. His bad will cancel the good.

Pharaoh was a perfect example of this syndrome. Pharaoh compensated for his huge inferiority complex by acting big and saying, "I own the Nile and I have made it myself." He proclaimed himself a g-d because he was so insecure.

What about Sarah?

This analysis raises a pressing question concerning Sarah's denial of laughter. How can we place her in the same category as Pharaoh and others in denial?

The answer is that, obviously, the fear that prompted her to deny that she laughed is categorically different from the fear that prompted Pharaoh's denial. In Pharaoh's case he feared losing his power and greatness. Sarah's fear, in stark contrast, was due to her sensitive and heightened spiritual state. She was

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concerned that she could have acted disrespectfully about G-d's ability to give her a child. Her denial was actually her way of saying, "It was not the true me who laughed. I could not have possibly done such a thing. I am better than that. It was a total aberration."

However, the common denominator in all these examples of denial is that it they were prompted by fear of losing something. In the case of Pharaoh it was the fear of losing his grip on power, and in the case of Sarah it was the fear of losing her connection with G-d.

In the period of Galus-exile, denial is rooted in fear and insecurity. This fear and insecurity is also the cause of the breakdown in relationships. We feel insecure and therefore we lose trust in others; especially if the actions of others make us feel diminished.

Living through the Ninth Plague and Enjoying the Light

The ninth plague in Egypt was the plague of darkness, which most likely occurred in the first two weeks of Nissan which we are in now. The plague of darkness brought fear and insecurity

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to the Egyptians. The Torah relates that “No person could see his brother.”

Perhaps this can be interpreted allegorically as well. Because of their fear and insecurity due to the darkness, they were unable to see the needs of the other. They could not appreciate what they received from others because they were so insecure.

However, as the Jewish nation was about to experience their liberation the Torah states that they had light. Even in the last moments of their exile, G-d gave them a taste of the light and clarity they would enjoy after their Exodus.

Metaphorically, this means that as we come to the end of exile, even though insecurity reigns throughout the world, we have the power to enjoy the clarity which dispels fear and denial.

As we stand now on the threshold between Galus and Geulah, we can choose to look back into the darkness of Galus and feel insecure with all of its attendant ills, or look ahead into Geulah and see things with clarity. Indeed, our Sages tell us that there were many fearful Jews who did not want to leave Egypt; they perished in the plague of darkness. They chose to look

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back, while the rest of the Jewish people looked forward and saw the light.

In choosing the latter approach, we accomplish several goals:

First, it enables us to live a full and vibrant life now, in these last moments of Galus, free of insecurity and fear.

Second, it helps us see the other (both upper case “Other” as well as lower case “other”) and thereby develop wholesome relationships

Third, it prepares us for the Redemption.

Fourth, it hastens the process of the complete Redemption.