



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Approaching the Altar

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## 1.

RASHI'S COMMENTARY ON THE CLAUSE: "WHEN THEY ENTER THE OHEL MOED"

"When they enter the Ohel Moed, they shall wash with water, so that they do not die; or when they approach the altar to serve, to burn a fire-offering to Hashem.<sup>1</sup> {They shall wash their hands and feet and they shall not die....}"<sup>2</sup>

Rashi quotes the words, "when they enter the Ohel Moed," and comments: "to burn in the morning and evening, incense;<sup>3</sup> or to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol<sup>4</sup> and the goats {to expiate for the sin} of idolatry."

What difficulty does Rashi want to solve with his interpretation?

Some commentators<sup>5</sup> say that Rashi wishes to forestall the thought that the penalty of death is incurred for a *biah reikanis*.<sup>6</sup> [A *biah reikanis* is defined as one entering the Ohel Moed (without first washing one's hands and feet) but one does **not** execute any service there.] {A person might entertain such an understanding because of the following difference in wording:} Here, the Torah says unequivocally: "**When they enter** (without qualification) the Ohel Moed, they shall wash with water..." In contrast, regarding service at the altar, the Torah says explicitly, "When they approach... to **serve**." From this variance, one might think that seemingly, **entry** into the Ohel Moed itself (even when it is **not** "to serve") necessitates the washing of one's hands and feet.

So {according to these commentators}, Rashi says the meaning of the clause, "when they enter the Ohel Moed," is to burn incense or to sprinkle the blood — the death penalty is incurred only when a person performs a sacred service without washing his hands and feet.

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<sup>1</sup> *Shemos* 30:20.

<sup>2</sup> {*ibid.*, v. 21.}

<sup>3</sup> This is the wording in the extant printed editions of Rashi; and similarly, in the second printed edition, and in several manuscripts. However, in the first edition (and in a number of manuscripts), it says: "to burn (there) incense in the morning and evening." Seemingly, the wording in the first edition reads smoother.

<sup>4</sup> {Lit., "the anointed Kohen." See *Vayikra* 4:3-7.}

<sup>5</sup> *Nachlas Yaacov*, as cited by *Sifsei Chachamim*, ad loc.; *Maskil L'Dovid*.

<sup>6</sup> {Lit., "a pointless entrance"; i.e., entering the Ohel Moed without intending to perform any sacred service.}

This explanation of these commentators, however, is very strained because:

a. According to their explanation, the difficulty with Rashi's interpretation becomes the reverse: From the **straightforward** meaning of the verse, where does Rashi deduce one does not incur the death penalty for entering the Ohel Moed {even} pointlessly {without washing}? This deduction seems to be **contrary** to a simple understanding of the passage: Even “**when they** {just} **enter** the Ohel Moed, they shall wash with water, so that they do not die.”

When we examine this verse through the lens of halachah, there is a rationale<sup>7</sup> to interpret the words “to serve” as also modifying the beginning clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed.” Thus, the verse would mean that only when entering the Ohel Moed “to serve” is there an obligation to wash one's hands and feet.

But if this was the basis for Rashi's conclusion, Rashi should have also quoted the words, “to serve,” in his caption. Since Rashi only quotes the words, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” not even adding, “etcetera,” it is understood that from just the words, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” it can be inferred that when the verse says, “when they enter,” the intention is “to burn....”

Moreover, according to the **straightforward** understanding of Scripture, there is no room to say that the term “to serve” qualifies the clause “when they enter the Ohel Moed.” Were this the case, then the Torah should have written: “When they enter the Ohel Moed or when they approach the altar to serve..., they shall wash with water, so that they do not die.”

However, since the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed” concluded with the clause, “they shall wash with water, so that they do not die,” and only afterwards, the Torah begins a new point, “**or** when they approach the altar to serve,” it is understood from the straightforward meaning of the verse that the

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<sup>7</sup> See *Zevachim* 19b; *Sanhedrin* 83a, *Tosafos*, s.v. “Velo”; *Rabbeinu Shimshon MiShantz* on *Keilim* 1:9.

term “to serve” does **not** qualify the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed.”

b. If Rashi’s intent is to underscore that the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed” does not refer to a *biah reikanis*, Rashi should have explained this **earlier**, concerning the command found in *parshas Tetzaveh*.<sup>8</sup> “They (the priestly garments) shall be on Aharon....” After all, the verse there also has these two subordinate clauses: “When they enter the Ohel Moed or when they approach the altar to serve in holiness.” Nonetheless, Rashi does not say there that the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” means when a kohen enters “to burn...,” that is, specifically, when the kohen is performing some particular service.

[And, seemingly, one would be hard-pressed to say that since in *parshas Tetzaveh*, **nothing** intervenes between the clauses, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” and, “when they approach the altar,” it is self-understood that the phrase, “to serve in holiness,” said at the end of the verse, also modifies the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” precluding any need for Rashi to comment.]

## 2.

### ENTERING INTO THE OHEL MOED IS ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF SERVICE

Furthermore, one certainly cannot say that Rashi’s intent is to negate a viewpoint that the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” includes a case of *biah reikanis*. After all, according to *psbat*, it would be an exceedingly great novelty to suggest that a *biah reikanis* into the Ohel Moed was feasible. Such a happenstance would contradict the principle that “Scripture speaks of commonplace scenarios”:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Shemos* 28:43.

<sup>9</sup> {Rashi on *Shemos* 21:28; 22:17, 21, 30; et al.}

A novice student of Scripture<sup>10</sup> knows that the Ohel Moed was the holiest of places.<sup>11</sup> A person didn't venture inside casually (for a stroll, or so forth). As denoted by **its name**, this place was a **Tent** designated for **Meeting**. Entry was restricted to times set by Hashem,<sup>12</sup> and when **commanded** by Hashem, for a specified purpose, to carry out a sacred service.<sup>13</sup>

[Also, according to halachah, a *biah reikanis* into the Heichal<sup>14</sup> was **prohibited**.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, commentators<sup>16</sup> explain that Rashi intends to preclude (not just an ordinary *biah reikanis*, but) entry into the Ohel Moed in order to prostrate oneself before Hashem, since “to prostrate oneself, entry {into the Heichal} was **permitted**.”<sup>17</sup>

According to *pshat*, though, it wouldn't make sense to permit entry into the Ohel Moed for prostration, because there was no Divine command to prostrate oneself. Also, if one did wish to prostrate oneself to Hashem, there would be no need to enter the Ohel Moed, as this was possible in the courtyard of the *Mishkan* (the *Azarah*).

And since a person only entered the Ohel Moed to perform a sacred service, understandably, the command to wash oneself with water before entering applied when a service had to be performed there.

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<sup>10</sup> {In the original, “*Ben chamesh lemikra*”; meaning, “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This is a term borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, which teaches that the age for a child to begin studying *Chumash* is at the age of five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

<sup>11</sup> The place where Moshe met {with Hashem}, similar to what transpired at Mount Sinai. And there, the Jewish people had been cautioned to make a boundary around the mountain and to sanctify it (*Shemos* 19:23). Also, this {requirement for a prepared and purposeful entry} can be deduced, *a fortiori*, from Yosef shaving himself before appearing before Pharaoh, out of respect for the monarchy (Rashi on *Bereishis* 41:14).

<sup>12</sup> See Rashi on *Shemos* 25:22.

<sup>13</sup> Insofar as the kohanim were concerned. Moshe, though, entered whenever Hashem wanted to speak with him (see Rashi, *ibid.*).

<sup>14</sup> {The Temple sanctuary.}

<sup>15</sup> *Menachos* 27b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Bias Mikdash*,” ch. 2, par. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Maskil L'Dovid*, ad loc.

<sup>17</sup> As *Maskil L'Dovid* puts it. See two opinions concerning this in *Kesef Mishnah* on *Mishneh Torah*, loc. cit; et al.

### 3.

#### THE COMMAND TO WASH BEFORE ENTERING ONLY APPLIED TO CERTAIN SERVICES

To unravel these questions, we need to first consider and solve the puzzling diction used by Rashi:

If Rashi only wanted to emphasize that the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” refers to entering the Ohel Moed to perform a divine **service**, then Rashi should have stated his commentary **succinctly**: “*When they enter the Ohel Moed — to serve*”!<sup>18</sup> Why does Rashi specify, “to burn... or to sprinkle”? After all, this is not the place to detail the sacred services performed in the Ohel Moed.

And even if we assume Rashi has a reason to give examples of the services carried out in the Ohel Moed, we need to clarify:

- a. Why does Rashi present specifically **these** examples, “to burn... or to sprinkle...,” and not different sorts of sacred services? For example, there was also the arranging of the showbread; preparing and lighting the lights of the menorah — services that the Torah discusses **much** earlier than the burning of incense, etc.!
- b. Moreover, the Torah hasn’t introduced yet the services that Rashi gives as examples: “to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats of idolatry.” Only **later** do we learn about these services. In *parshas Vayikra*,<sup>19</sup> we learn about the bull of the Kohen Gadol; and in *parshas Shelach*,<sup>20</sup> about the goats of idolatry. Why does Rashi **introduce** these sacred services to us **here**, telling us that this verse is referring to **these** services!?
- c. In his first example, Rashi includes some seemingly extraneous details: “to burn **in the morning and evening**, incense.” This is puzzling: Certainly,

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<sup>18</sup> Or used the wording of the *Toras Kohanim* (commenting on *Vayikra* 10:9), “during a time of sacred service.”

<sup>19</sup> *Vayikra* 4:3, et passim.

<sup>20</sup> *Bamidbar* 15:22, et passim.

this is not the place to relate the **number** of times incense was burnt!

[This question is especially sharp considering that the Torah just recently taught, at the end of *parshas Tetzaveh*,<sup>21</sup> that the incense was burnt twice daily. As such, had Rashi simply said, “to burn incense,” we would have known already that the burning of the incense took place in the morning and evening.]

From all these {puzzling} nuances in Rashi’s wording, it is understood that Rashi’s intent is **not** to point out that the clause, “when they enter the Ohel Moed,” means, in order “to serve.” This is not why Rashi gives us **examples** of services performed in the Ohel Moed. Rather, his intent is to inform us that the law to wash one’s hands and feet “when they **enter** the Ohel Moed” applies for these particular services: “*When they enter the Ohel Moed* — to burn in the morning and evening, incense; or to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats of idolatry.”

#### 4.

TWO WAYS OF EXPLAINING THE OBLIGATION OF WASHING WITH WATER

The explanation:

The question in this verse that Rashi addresses is the following: Why does Scripture, in the passage, differentiate between entering the Ohel Moed and approaching the altar to serve? And Scripture differentiates to the extent that the obligation to wash, and the warning of the fatal consequences for failing to wash, are reiterated **separately** in each case.<sup>22</sup>

[Seemingly, the obligation and warning could have been given for both cases together. This would resemble the wording of the obligation to wear the

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<sup>21</sup> *Shemos* 30:7, 8.

<sup>22</sup> As Rashi points out in his commentary on v. 21.

priestly garments:<sup>23</sup> “They {the garments} shall be worn by Aharon and his sons when entering the Ohel Moed or when approaching the altar to perform sacred service.” Combining both parts would especially make sense given that the conclusion of the verse, “to burn a fire-offering to Hashem,” would then refer also to the earlier clause, “When they enter the Ohel Moed.”]

From this differentiation, Rashi deduces that there is a distinction between the obligation to wash before entering the Ohel Moed and the obligation to wash before approaching the altar to serve:

Washing before advancing to the altar to serve is a law about “approaching,” **in general**, the conclusion of which is marked by the performance of an altar **service**: Any time a service on the altar is performed, there is a separate obligation to wash.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast, the law to wash before entering the Ohel Moed is a law about “**entering**.” (Even though this entry is to perform a service, as explained in Section 2, the point of serving is **not** mentioned here.) After washing, and before entering the Ohel Moed, any number of sacred services could be performed. Put differently, the obligation to wash before entering is not a detail interlinked with the **service** carried out in the Ohel Moed, that every service required a **separate** washing. Rather, the washing required was a detail concerning **entry** into the Ohel Moed.

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<sup>23</sup> *Shemos* 28:43.

<sup>24</sup> An illustration of this idea: Every Divine communication... was preceded by a separate Divine calling (Rashi’s commentary at the beginning of *Vayikra*, citing *Toras Kohanim*).



## 5.

### THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS WERE PART OF THE SERVICE; THE WASHING, A PRELUDE FOR SERVICE

The reason that Aharon and his sons only had a single obligation to wear the priestly garments (“they shall be worn...”) covering both cases {of entering the Ohel Moed and approaching the altar} whereas washing had a separate obligation for each of the two cases, is readily understood:

The priestly garments were integral to the service itself. The service had to be performed while wearing these garments. Consequently, differentiating between entering the Ohel Moed and approaching the altar was impossible, since both acts were prompted by the **same** obligation: One had to wear the priestly garments while executing the (“sacred”) service.

In contrast, the washing of one’s hands and feet was only a **preparation** for the service. One had to cleanse oneself (and sanctify oneself)<sup>25</sup> before beginning the service. And therefore, there could be, and there was, a distinction:

A single washing sufficed to enter the Ohel Moed, as it was a place designated exclusively for kohanim, and was entered for only a short duration, even if the kohanim had entered to perform several services.

In contrast, when the kohanim approached the **altar** to serve, they did so in the Mishkan’s **courtyard** where the altar was situated. In the courtyard, there were also Levites and regular Jews who brought in their animal sacrifices to perform *semichah*<sup>26</sup> on them, etc. So in the courtyard, a kohen needed to wash before performing every service.

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<sup>25</sup> Rashi here on v. 29.

<sup>26</sup> {For most private sacrifices, the owner had to place his hands on the animal’s head and apply pressure before it was slaughtered. This is known as *semichah*.}

## 6.

“WHEN THEY ENTER” — TO PERFORM THE REGULAR AND THE IRREGULAR SERVICES

On this basis, it is understandable why Rashi specifies: “to burn in the morning and evening, incense”:

Rashi’s intent here can be deduced **readily** from his wording: The obligation to wash was in force **twice** daily, when the kohanim would “**enter**” into the Ohel Moed “to burn in the morning and evening, incense.”

[The reason is simple, as Scripture speaks about what was commonplace: After concluding the services in the Ohel Moed in the morning, the kohanim would typically leave. Consequently, in the afternoon, they would **again** “enter,” setting foot anew in the Ohel Moed to perform the afternoon service. This was the case, especially if we assume (as discussed in Section 2) that when one was not engaged in performing a sacred service, remaining in the Ohel Moed was prohibited.]

Rashi chooses specifically the example of incense, because according to **Rashi**, the burning of the incense was the **first** service of the day in the Ohel Moed. Accordingly, this entry into the Ohel Moed was the first service (that required the kohen to wash), as explained in Section 7. Therefore, after washing upon entering to burn the incense, no subsequent washings were required for the other (regular) services performed inside the Ohel Moed, because there were no additional entries.

[Of course, if a different kohen entered to perform another service, he was obligated to wash (since this constituted his {first} entry into the Ohel Moed).

Rashi, however, wishes to bring attention to the **novelty** introduced by this verse. Namely, the obligation to wash was not triggered by the need to perform a service, but by the **entry** of the kohanim — “when they enter.” Therefore, once a kohen washed in order to enter the Ohel Moed and to burn the incense, **he** was not obligated to wash again before any other service.]

Based on the above explanation, it turns out that when Rashi says, “to burn in the morning and evening, incense,” Rashi’s intent is not to emphasize that the washing is linked only with the **service of the incense**. Rather, his intent is to point out the fixed **time** for entering the Ohel Moed. Typically, the kohanim entered the Ohel Moed twice daily — in the morning and in the afternoon — to burn incense.<sup>27</sup>

And in this context, we understand why Rashi afterwards adds, “or to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats of idolatry.” Rashi adds this clause because **these** services performed inside the Ohel Moed were **not** included among the regular services.

In other words, Rashi specifies the two scenarios in which the Ohel Moed was entered: (a) There was a **regular**, daily entry, in order to burn the morning incense (and all that followed in its train regularly), and the afternoon incense. (b) There was an entry to fulfill some irregular, special need — “to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats of idolatry.”

## 7.

RASHI ADOPTS THE VIEWPOINT THAT THE MAIN SERVICE IN THE MORNING WAS THE INCENSE

Rashi’s commentary contains marvelous ideas in the area of halachah:

Regarding Aharon’s service with the menorah, the Torah (at the end of *parshas Tetzaveh*)<sup>28</sup> uses two different verbs: About the morning service, it says {regarding Aharon}, “**be’heitivo**<sup>29</sup> the lamps,” whereas regarding the afternoon service, it says, “When Aharon **kindles** the lamps.”

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<sup>27</sup> On this basis, we can explain our version of Rashi’s commentary, “to burn in the morning and evening, incense” (and not, “to burn incense in the morning, etc.” [see fn. 3]). Because the main point here is the **time periods** of morning and afternoon. Yet, some measure of additional analysis is warranted because {if the emphasis is on the time periods} then Scripture should have said, “...in the morning and in the afternoon to burn incense.”

<sup>28</sup> {*Shemos* 30:7, 8.}

<sup>29</sup> {A derivative of the word, *tov*, meaning “good.” The word “*hatavah*,” used later, is also a different form of *tov*. At issue is how were the lamps to be made “good”? Was it through cleaning them, as Rashi maintains; or was it through their lighting, as Rambam maintains? See *supra*.}

The argument between Rashi and Rambam regarding the *hatavah* of the lamps is well known:<sup>30</sup>

Rambam<sup>31</sup> explains that the kindling of the lamps makes up the *hatavah* of the lamps. According to this opinion, {it turns out that} the menorah was lit twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, Rashi<sup>33</sup> explains the word “*be’heitivo*” as, “an idiom denoting **cleaning** the cups of the menorah of the ashes of the wicks that burned at night.” According to his opinion, {it turns out that} the menorah was lit only once a day, in the afternoon.

Understandably, Rashi is consistent here with his own viewpoint. Based on the **straightforward**<sup>34</sup> way of understanding Scripture, logically, the primary service of the menorah was its **kindling**. In contrast, “cleaning the menorah’s cups” and clearing away the ashes (the *hatavah*) were just preparations, getting the lamps ready so that afterwards, they could be lit in the afternoon.

This understanding {that the primary menorah service was its kindling} is also plainly implied by the passages speaking about the menorah. The subject of kindling the menorah is mentioned **numerous** times,<sup>35</sup> whereas the *hatavah* of the lamps is mentioned (a) only **once**;<sup>36</sup> (b) and not in the passages speaking about the menorah, but only parenthetically, in the Torah section speaking about **incense altar**, in order to note the time for **burning the incense** in the morning (“*be’heitivo* the lamps, he shall burnt it {the incense}”).

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<sup>30</sup> For an elucidation of the discussion that follows, see *Encyclopedia Talmudis*, vol. 8, under the entries of “*hadlakas ha’neiros*,” and “*hatavos ha’neiros*,” and the **other sources** noted there.

<sup>31</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Temidim u’Musafim*,” ch. 3, par. 12.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 10; see commentary of *Kesef Mishneh* on par. 12, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> On *Shemos* 30:7; and likewise in his Talmudic commentary (*Menachos* 88b), as *Kesef Mishneh* notes, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Based on the halachic way of understanding Scripture, the reverse was true. After all, the *hatavah* of the lamps was considered a service that had to be performed specifically by a kohen. In contrast, the kindling of the menorah was not a service, *per se*, and could be performed by a non-kohen. (*Yoma* 24b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Biyas Mikdash*,” ch. 9, par. 5, 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Shemos* 25:37; *beg. of parshas Tetzaveh*; *ibid.*, 30:8; *Vayikrah* 24:2; *beg. of parshas Behaaloscha*.

<sup>36</sup> *End of parshas Tetzaveh*.

For this reason, Rashi says here that the entry to the Ohel Moed spoken about in the verse was in order “**to burn...**” Because in Rashi’s opinion, the burning of the incense was the primary **service** in the Ohel Moed in the morning. In the morning, the entry was (primarily) for the sake of the incense and not for the sake of cleaning the menorah cups, “*be’heitivo* the lamps,” as this was (not a service in itself, but) only a preparation for the kindling in the **afternoon**.

And since by writing the clause, “to burn... incense,” Rashi does not mean to say that the washing was specifically for the sake of **this** service, but rather just to give us a **time-marker** indicating when the kohanim entered (as explained in Section 6)

— and regarding the morning entry into the Ohel Moed, Rashi must say “to burn... incense” (because this was the first service, as explained) —

therefore, Rashi also uses the burning of the incense (and not the kindling of the lamps) as a time-marker to indicate when the kohanim entered the Ohel Moed in the afternoon, because the burning of the incense and the kindling of the lamps were performed at the **same** point in time, **sequentially**, as it says,<sup>37</sup> “when Aharon kindles the lamps in the afternoon, he shall burn....”

## 8.

### BURNING THE INCENSE BEFORE KINDLING THE LAMPS

We can posit, perhaps, that the reason Rashi says, “to burn in the morning and evening, incense” is because he thinks that the inference to be drawn from the verses, “at his cleaning {*be’heitivo*} of the lamps, he shall burn it {the incense},” and “when Aharon kindles the lamps in the afternoon, he shall burn it {the incense}” is (**not** that the burning of the incense took place **after** cleaning the lamps {in the morning} and **after** the kindling the lamps {in the afternoon}, but) that the burning of the incense had to be performed in the same

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<sup>37</sup> {*Shemos* 30:8.}

**timeframe** as the cleaning and kindling of the lamps, except that the burning came **beforehand** and was the first service in both the morning and the afternoon.

The proof of this (to return to the earlier explanation of Rashi's viewpoint):

The *hatavah* of the lamps was only (a) a matter of **cleaning**; and (b) it was merely a preparation and a prerequisite for the afternoon menorah kindling. Therefore, one can (obviously) presume that Aharon performed the principal service of the morning, the burning of the incense, initially, and only afterwards he cleaned the lamps to prepare for the kindling of the lamps in the afternoon.

From this it is understood that the verse, "When Aharon kindles the lamps in the afternoon, he shall burn it {the incense}" (which is stated immediately afterwards), also means to **prioritize** the incense burning to the kindling of the lamps.

## 9.

### THE SPIRITUAL INNER AND OUTER ALTARS IN A PERSON

From the "wine of Torah" in Rashi's commentary:

Washing the hands and feet signifies that before a Jew begins his sacred service, he needs to cleanse himself of undesirable elements.

There is a difference between the washing done before performing the service on the outer altar and the washing done upon entering the Ohel Moed to burn incense on the inner altar:

The difference between the outer altar and the inner altar is the following: The outer altar was used to offer sacrifices, which exemplifies the *avodah* of *birurim*, refinement {of the fallen spiritual sparks}. An animal is taken, spiritually refined, and elevated to holiness. In contrast, the inner altar was used

for the incense, קטורת, service. The point of this service was (not *birurim*, but) to forge a bond, as intimated by the word קטורת, as in the {Aramaic} statement,<sup>38</sup> “With one bond, קטירנא, I was bonded, אתקטרנא {with You}” – to strengthen one’s attachment with Hashem.

Correspondingly, these two levels also exist in the “outer altar” and the “inner altar” of Jews: The **outer** altar parallels the outer heart where the *avodah* of *birurim* is possible (and imperative). By contrast, the **inner** altar parallels the **inwardness** of the heart, where *birurim* is not germane. In the context of the inwardness of the heart, a person’s *avodah* needs to be focused on buttressing his bond with Hashem.

Therefore, when a person’s *avodah* is performed on the outer level of the heart that is linked with worldly matters, and the possibility of encountering evil is real, a person must constantly be vigilant. Therefore, whenever a Jew gets ready to perform a service on the altar, he must prepare again by washing.

However, when a Jew has reached the spiritual level of *avodah* associated with the inwardness of the heart, he already stands above worldly matters; therefore, a single washing before entering to perform his *avodah* suffices.

Nonetheless, he is cautioned that when he enters “to sprinkle the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats {to expiate for the sin} of idolatry,” a separate washing is required:

When speaking about the service of the incense, {emblematic of} **a person’s bond** with Hashem, a single “washing” is sufficient. But when a person needs to **atone** for something **unseemly** {on behalf of someone else}, he again needs to “wash” beforehand.

For although the person himself, in truth, has already severed himself from worldly affairs in general, and evil in particular, extra caution is called for when

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<sup>38</sup> *Idra Zutra (Zohar, vol. 3, 288a).*

he must get involved with expunging something negative, to ensure that he will not be influenced and slip from his level.

Therefore, the sprinkling of “the blood of the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the goats of idolatry” is performed specifically after the preparatory washing. Then, afterwards, this brings **peace to the world**.<sup>39</sup> The greater the fall, the greater the elevation brought about by the rectification.

So the goats of idolatry — a *chatas*<sup>40</sup> that follows an *olah*<sup>41</sup> — **supplement** the *olah*.<sup>42</sup>

— From a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Ki Sisa*, 5742 (1982)

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<sup>39</sup> Rashi on *Vayikra* 4:10 (citing *Toras Kohanim*, ad loc.).

<sup>40</sup> {Commonly translated as “sin offering,” it was brought for the violation of specific sins.}

<sup>41</sup> {Commonly translated as “an elevation offering,” it was consumed completely on the altar.} Rashi on *Bamidbar* 15:24 (*Horiyos* 13a).

<sup>42</sup> See Rashi on *Vayikra* (5:8; *Zevachim* 7b) that the *olah* sacrifice resembled a gift...; and “the term, *mechapperes* {atones}... does not imply atonement for his soul but... to {again} be a source of satisfaction to his Maker” (*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 2).