



Likkutei Sichos

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Sinners Are Great

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1.

YOUR PEOPLE

On the verse,¹ “Hashem spoke to Moshe: ‘ Go, ascend from here, you and the people whom you brought up from the land of Egypt...,” Rashi remarks (in his second gloss on this verse): “*You and the people* — Here it does not say, ‘*your people*.’”

Simply put, Rashi’s explanation is a thematic continuation of (the second interpretation in) the previous gloss: “ *Go, ascend from here* — Corresponding to what He had told Moshe at the time of His anger, ‘Go, descend,’² He said to him at the time of goodwill, ‘ Go, ascend.’” Subsequently, Rashi says that just as regarding Moshe when Hashem said “ Go, ascend,” He “remedied” that which He said earlier (“at the time of anger”), “Go, descend” — so it was regarding the Jews: Earlier, Hashem said, “(Go, descend) because your people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt became corrupt” — an expression of reproof. (As **Rashi** explains,³ “*Your people became corrupt* — It does not say, ‘*the people became corrupt*,’ but rather, ‘*your people*,’ the mixed multitude⁴ whom you accepted on your own initiative... became corrupt and corrupted others.”) **Now**, Hashem said, “(Go, ascend from here...) you and **the people**... (and not “your people”).

However, we need to clarify: In the earlier verse, where the Torah discusses the mixed multitude who “became corrupt and corrupted others,” we can understand that Rashi emphasizes the Torah’s nuanced wording — “*your people*” rather than “*the people*” — because until that point, we had not yet learned that only the mixed multitude were considered “your people.” Subsequently, however, in our verse, the subject of which is the journey toward the land of Israel — “ Go, ascend... to the land that I swore...” — “the people” clearly refers to **all** Jews. Why, then, would we assume that Scripture should

¹ *Shemos* 33:1.

² *Shemos* 32:7.

³ *Rashi* on *Shemos* 32:7.

⁴ {Converts who left Egypt together with the Jews.}

have said, “your people” {i.e., the mixed multitude}, to the extent that Rashi had to explain the change (“Here it does not say, ‘*your* people”)?

On the other hand, if there is a reason to refer to *all* Jews (also) as “your people,” and if in this context, they should specifically be referred to by **this** appellation, we would understand {why Rashi has to point out} the **novelty** {of the verse} and emphasis that “**here** it does not say, ‘your people.” {But if this were the case} Rashi should have offered this explanation (two verses) **earlier**, where it says,⁵ “Go lead **the people** to where I have told you.” This is where Rashi should have remarked, “Here it does not say, ‘*your* people.”

2.

MOSHE'S PEOPLE

The explanation: Rashi is addressing (another) unclear point: We can understand why the Torah needs to say here “Go, ascend from here” regarding **Moshe** (“you”), since until now the Torah does not record that the original command to “go, descend” was rescinded.

However, regarding the remainder of the Jews, “the people”: Since earlier the Torah already said, “Go lead the people to where I have told you,” what does the clause, “Go, ascend... to the land...” add, over what was said previously? Why was this instruction so necessary that Hashem had to make a **separate** statement — “Hashem spoke to Moshe: ‘Go, ascend’”? {That this verse is a separate and additional statement from the earlier one is seen by the fact that between them} there was even an interruption {in the Torah’s narrative} to describe the events of “Hashem smote the people...”⁶

Rashi, therefore, explains that the two verses refer to two different groups of people: “Go lead the people...” refers to descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov (whereas the others, “whoever has sinned against Me — I will erase

⁵ *Shemos* 32:34.

⁶ *Shemos* 32:35.

him from My book”).⁷ **Later**, after “Hashem smote... (i.e., carried out part of their punishment) for making the {Golden} Calf,” Hashem introduces something new, in a separate statement: “Go, ascend from here... and the people....” This statement refers only to the mixed multitude, who required a separate warning (and penance), as explained in Section 5.

[This also clarifies why the Torah says **here**, “The people whom **you** brought up from the land of Egypt” (that **Moshe** took out of Egypt) — similar to the wording earlier, “**Your** people that **you** have brought up from the land of Egypt became corrupt” (referring to “the mixed multitude whom you accepted on your own initiative,” as mentioned above). Because here, too, the Torah refers **only** to the mixed multitude {whom Moshe took on his own initiative}.]

3.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

The Torah describes explicitly the difference between these two groups in relation to those that actually worshiped the Golden Calf:

Rashi had explained earlier:⁸

Three death penalties were meted out {for those who worshiped the Golden Calf}: If there were witnesses and warning — {they were punished} by the sword...; witnesses without warning — through a plague...; neither witnesses nor warning — through *hydrokan*,⁹ for the water tested them and their stomachs became distended.

When these “three death penalties” are described in the Torah, we find a conspicuous difference between them: Regarding sword, it says,¹⁰ “there fell from **the people....**” Also regarding the plague, it says,¹¹ “Hashem smote **the**

⁷ {*Shemos* 32:33.}

⁸ *Rashi* on *Shemos* 32:20.

⁹ {A disease that distends the belly (*Rashi* on *Berachos* 25a). This is similar to the death suffered by a *sotah* found guilty of adultery; see beg. sec. 4 of this *sichah*.}

¹⁰ *Shemos* 32:28.

¹¹ *Shemos* 32:35.

people.” However, regarding those who “the water tested... and their stomachs became distended,” it says,¹² “He gave the **Children of Israel** to drink.”

The **obvious** difference between “the people” and “the Children of Israel” is that “the people” includes the entire nation, including converts, etc., whereas “the Children of Israel” (when it appears in contrast to “the people”) means {specifically} descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. This difference is also highlighted in the verse regarding the exodus from Egypt:¹³ “The **Children of Israel** traveled... about six hundred thousand on foot, the men.... And **also a mixed multitude** went up with them.” This implies that the mixed multitude was not included in the tally of the (six hundred thousand)¹⁴ Children of Israel.

This introduces a great novelty: Since the Torah says that “He gave the **Children of Israel** to drink,” this means that the mixed multitude were **not** given to drink. Accordingly, we must say that those of mixed multitude who had worshiped the Golden Calf without witnesses and warning remained alive.

And the Divine decree {proclaimed also on the mixed multitude as implied by Hashem’s earlier statement}, “I will erase him from My book,” was not {actualized immediately in a manner of} “to destroy them all at once.”¹⁵ Rather, “on the day I make an accounting, I will bring it to account,”¹⁶ similar to how the decree was carried out on the rest of the Jewish people.¹⁷ This is because Moshe also interceded with Hashem on behalf of the mixed multitude, and Hashem replied, “I have listened **to you.**”¹⁸

¹² *Shemos* 32:20.

¹³ *Shemos* 12:37-38.

¹⁴ This is also proved by the censuses in *parshas Bamidbar* and *parshas Pinchas*, in which only the members of the tribes were enumerated.

¹⁵ {Rashi on *Shemos* 32:34.}

¹⁶ {*Shemos* 32:34.}

¹⁷ {Meaning, the Jewish people were not punished out all at once, but little by little, over time. Similarly, the Rebbe is saying that also the punishment decreed upon the mixed multitude was also not meted out all at once.}

¹⁸ {*Rashi* *ibid.* Seemingly, the Rebbe is highlighting “to you” to imply that Hashem granted everything that Moshe requested: Not only his prayer regarding the Jews (descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov) but also regarding the mixed multitude.}

4.

NOT EVERYONE WAS TESTED

Why, indeed, was the mixed multitude not given to drink? Rashi explains this in his gloss on the clause, “He gave the Children of Israel to drink,” and in his commentary further in the *parshah*:

On the clause, “He gave the Children of Israel to drink,” Rashi says: “He intended to test them like **sotahs**.”¹⁹ How does the comparison to “*sotahs*” fit here? This is understood based on Rashi’s commentary further in the *parshah*. On the clause, “Hew for yourself,”²⁰ Rashi says:

This is analogous to a king who... left his betrothed with the maidservants {and as a result of the immoral behavior of the maidservants, his betrothed acquired a bad reputation}.... Likewise, the king {in the parable} represents Hashem; the maidservants, the *mixed multitude*; the bridesman, Moshe; and the betrothed of Hashem is Israel.

In other words, the sin of the Golden Calf is similar to the debasement of a **betrothed woman**, and thus, “He intended to test them **as sotahs**.”

This **clearly** explains why the mixed multitude was not given to drink — since “**the maidservants represent the mixed multitude**,” i.e., they are **not** “the betrothed of Hashem,” so there is no point “to test them **as sotahs**.”²¹

¹⁹ {A married women suspected of adultery.}

²⁰ *Shemos* 34:1.

²¹ {A woman who is unmarried is not subject to this test to prove her chastity. Accordingly, only the Children of Israel were tested, since the Jews were betrothed to Hashem, unlike the mixed multitude who are merely compared to *maidservants*.}

5.

ELEVATING THE MIXED MULTITUDE

Based on all the above, we understand the additional novelty introduced by the verse, “Go, ascend... and the people...,” over the verse “go lead the people...”:

“Go lead the people...” refers to the Jews who did **not** worship the Golden Calf [since those from among the Jews who had worshiped the Calf were punished by the above-mentioned three death penalties]. Their sin was that they did not protest (or do something similar).

On the other hand, in the verse “go, ascend...,” Hashem informs Moshe of something new — that even the members of the mixed multitude who **did sin** with the Golden Calf [and remained alive due to there being no witnesses and warning] are **included** in the directive to “go....” Moreover, “go, **ascend...**” implies that they (also) will be **elevated**.

How did their elevation manifest itself? To address this, Rashi says, “Here it does **not** say, ‘your people’”: They had repented for their transgression, and therefore, they could now be referred to (not as “*your* people,” but by a more elevated title) as “the people.”

6.

ONLY MOSHE AND THE MIXED MULTITUDE

On this basis, we can also clarify why specifically here the Torah emphasizes and adds (to the earlier verse, “go lead the people to where I have told you”): “Go, ascend **from here**, you and the people....” Seemingly, the correct wording would have been, “go, ascend, you and the people....”

The emphasis here is that the ascent must be “**from here**” — away from (and {to a place spiritually} loftier than) the sin of the Golden Calf [both

regarding Moshe {"you"}²² — I gave you this high position only for their sake,²³ and regarding {"the people"} the mixed multitude, who had worshiped the Golden Calf].

Conversely, the other Jews (about whom the Torah says, "go lead the people...") who did **not** worship the Golden Calf did not need to be instructed to "go... **from here**" (from the sin of the Golden Calf).

7.

MADE ETERNAL BY MOSHE

At the end of the day, however, this is still not completely clear: How is it possible that specifically the mixed multitude, who were the primary transgressors and worshipers of the Calf ("they became corrupt and corrupted others"): a) were not all punished by death; and, b) that Hashem says regarding them, (not just "lead," but) "**ascend**"?

We may explain this by prefacing with a teaching of our Sages:²⁴ the *Mishkan* is eternal because Moshe's deeds are eternal. True, the gold and silver, etc., {for the *Mishkan*} were contributed by all the Jews, and the construction of the *Mishkan* and its utensils was accomplished by Betzalel, etc., and not by Moshe²⁵. The erection of the *Mishkan*, however, was carried out by Moshe²⁶ (and Moshe explained how to make the *Mishkan* — "as you will have been shown on the mountain"²⁷) {thus making the *Mishkan* eternal}. How much more so {should the conversion of the mixed multitude have been eternal} — "the mixed multitude whom on your own initiative, you accepted and **converted them**,"

²² {who originally experienced a spiritual decline due to the sin of the Golden Calf, as Hashem told him, "Descend from your high position."}}

²³ Rashi on *Shemos* 32:7.

²⁴ *Sotah* 9a.

²⁵ Rashi on *Shemos* 39:33.

²⁶ {*Shemos* 40:18 ff.}

²⁷ *Shemos* 26:30.

placing them {in the same category as the converts made by Avraham, concerning whom it says} “the souls that **he made**.”²⁸

8.

ROYAL DECREE TO SIN

A deeper explanation is the following: The complete rectification of the sin of the Golden Calf is expressed through the fact that the mixed multitude was [not **destroyed**, but] rectified and **elevated**, as we will explain.

We will understand this by prefacing with a teaching of our Sages regarding the sin of the Golden Calf:²⁹ “The Jewish people were not deserving of {involvement in} that incident”; the sin of the Golden Calf³⁰ “was a Royal decree... in order to pave the way³¹ for a penitent.”³²

The deeper meaning of this teaching is known³³: The objective “to pave the way for a penitent” did not only apply just to **future** *baalei teshuvah*, but (also) to the Jews of **that** time, so that they should reach the level of *baalei teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* is not an *avodah*³⁴ that a person can select {to fulfill} **in advance**. In fact, “someone who says I will sin and I will repent is not given an opportunity to repent.”³⁵ Rather, after a person falters {and sins}, he is provided an opportunity in which he can and must do *teshuvah*.

At the same time, the *avodah* of *teshuvah* possesses a great advantage over the *avodah* of *tzaddikim*,³⁶ as our Sages put it,³⁷ “In the place where a *baal teshuvah* stands, even a complete *tzaddik* cannot.”

²⁸ Rashi on Bereishis 12:5.

²⁹ *Avodah Zarah* 4b.

³⁰ Rashi on *Avodah Zarah* 4b, s.v. “*lo asu*.”

³¹ {Lit., “create an opening,” or open an avenue.}

³² {In the Hebrew original, “*baal teshuvah*”; lit., “a master of return.” This refers to an individual who has sinned in the past, has regretted his behavior, and turned himself around, resolving never to repeat his sins.}

³³ See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, p. 240 and fn. 28.

³⁴ {Divine service.}

³⁵ *Mishnah Yoma* 8:9.

³⁶ {The righteous, who have not sinned.}

³⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 7, par. 4 — based on the opinion of Rav Avahu in *Berachos* 34b.

Hence, in order for (also) the Jews who lived at the time of the Giving of the Torah to be able to reach the level of *teshuvah* — who on their own would not be able to attain this type of *avodah* (since “they controlled their evil inclination”)³⁸ — there had to be a “Royal decree,” allowing the evil inclination to temporarily control them. This enabled the Jews to attain the elevation of *teshuvah*.

9.

SINNER’S ADVANTAGE

Among the advantages of the *avodah* of *teshuvah* over the *avodah* of *tzaddikim* is that the holy sparks submerged in the three totally impure *kelipos*³⁹ can be elevated only through *teshuvah*:

An upstanding person — a *tzaddik* — can elevate the holy sparks that are within the realm of that which is permissible and allowable {by utilizing worldly goods for Divinely oriented purposes}. In contrast, the forbidden must be **pushed away** (a person cannot transform the forbidden into something holy).

A *baal teshuvah*, on the other hand, through his complete *teshuvah*, can transform his intentional sins into **merits**.⁴⁰ Meaning, not only does he **neutralize** the bad, but even more so — he **elevates** the sparks of holiness that were {entrapped} within his intentional sins to the extent that they are transformed into merits (and subsumed in holiness).

³⁸ Rashi on *Avodah Zarah* 4b, loc. cit.

³⁹ {*Kelipah*, lit., “a shell” or “a peel,” refers to anything that conceals, and thus opposes G-dliness, just as a shell or a peel conceals the fruit within. *Kelipah* is often used to refer to evil or impurity. Kabbalah delineates two distinct types of *kelipah*: *Kelipas nogah* — literally *kelipah* that is translucent, and so can be illuminated; and the *shalosh kelipos hatmeios* — “three totally impure *kelipos*.” *Kelipas nogah* can be uplifted and refined, while conventionally, the only form of reformation or redemption for the three impure *kelipos* is their destruction. Yet, as explained in this *sichah*, through *teshuvah*, one can even elevate the G-dly sparks which were entrapped in the *shalosh kelipos hatmeios* as a result of his sins.}

⁴⁰ *Yoma* 86b.

10.

ELEVATING THE SPARKS

The above-mentioned difference between a *tzaddik* and a *baal teshuvah* — that only a *baal teshuvah* can elevate the sparks trapped within the three totally impure *kelipos* — is not only a consequence of a *tzaddik* having no intentional sins. Rather, it is also a consequence of the fundamental difference between the divine service of *tzaddikim* and of *baalei teshuvah*.

To explain: From the perspective of Hashem’s true unity, it is impossible to say that anything exists outside of this unity. As our Sages say,⁴¹ “There is nothing else aside from Him’...,⁴² even sorcery... which contradicts the Heavenly court....”⁴³ However, within this framework — within {the manner how they are subsumed in} Hashem’s unity — there are two aspects:

a) Evil does not contradict Hashem’s unity, since it has no {real} existence; it is simply the “absence” {of good and G-dliness.} This {reality} becomes evident by actively shunning anything associated with evil.⁴⁴

b) The holy spark that vitalizes an evil entity becomes openly united with G-dliness, despite previously being “so distant and darkened to the point that it seems to be evil.”⁴⁵ Because the purpose and ultimate objective of the creation of evil [which is the spark of holiness within it] is that the evil is transformed into good and **elevated** to holiness. This is achieved through the *avodah* of *teshuvah*, when “intentional sins become merits” — the spark is **elevated** to holiness.

⁴¹ *Chulin* 7b.

⁴² {*Devarim* 4:35.}

⁴³ {Implying that even sorcery, a lowly form of idolatry, is also part of Hashem’s unity.}

⁴⁴ {In *Toras Sholom, Sefer Hasichos*, p. 134ff, the Rebbe Rashab explains that the source of *kelipah* (evil) is the fact that Hashem does *not* desire them (the “absence” of Hashem’s will). Therefore, their existence is merely the absence of good. This is illustrated by the concept of a *nisayon* (test), when a person encounters obstacles to his observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, tests which seem very real and overwhelming. However, when a person makes a steadfast resolution to observe the *mitzvah* no matter what, then these obstacles vanish. This phenomenon highlights how the *kelipos* (which were behind this obstacle) possess no inherent existence.}

⁴⁵ *Hemshech* 5672, ch. 374; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5670, p. 103; *Maamar Vayigdelu Hane’arim* 5665.

11.

THE PURPOSE OF EVIL

Generally, this is the difference between Hashem's unity from the perspective of G-dliness, and Hashem's unity as revealed in the world:⁴⁶

From the perspective of Hashem's unity revealed in the world — that the world **as it is** is unified with G-dliness — since the function of evil, from the world's perspective, is to oppose G-dliness, Hashem's unity is revealed by rejecting evil. This brings to light how evil is really a non-existence.

From the perspective of G-diness, however, any object's true existence is only its inwardness and purpose — the Divine spark and the word of Hashem that vitalizes it. Thus, from the perspective of “the word of Hashem” that enlivens evil, so to speak, all that is sensed is that the existence of evil is its sublimation (through *teshuvah*) to holiness.

12.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

This is the difference between the *avodah* of *tzaddikim* and of *teshuvah*:

The *avodah* of *tzaddikim* is conducted by drawing from Above to below⁴⁷ — diffusing G-dliness **into** the world. The same applies to {how *tzaddikim* relate to} evil — they reveal Hashem's unity in evil as it is from the **world's** perspective ({and from the perspective of the} “world, עולם” {etymologically related to העולם, meaning “concealment”} — {the existence of evil is to} conceal and **oppose** G-dliness). This {unity of G-dliness in evil} is achieved by **rejecting** evil, as discussed above.

⁴⁶ Regarding the subsequent explanation, note the distinction between the two modes of Hashem's unity — *Hashem echad* top down and *Hashem echad* bottom up — in *Toras Shalom*, p. 49 ff.; p. 184 ff.; et al.

⁴⁷ See *Maamar “Tikku 5661”*; et al.

The *avodah* of a *baal teshuvah* {in contrast,} is conducted by elevating from below to Above — **withdrawing** from the world. From this perspective, what is felt is the way things are from the perspective of “Above.” The same applies to {how a *baal teshuvah* relates to} evil — he recognizes the deeper meaning and purpose of evil, {as it is from the perspective of} it’s “Hashem’s word” which is unified with Hashem {and brings evil into existence, for the purpose of elevating it to holiness}. Therefore, a *baal teshuvah* (through his *teshuvah*) can elevate the (spark embedded within the) evil to holiness.

13.

THE SIN ORIGINATED AT MT. SINAI

This will help us understand the teaching of our Sages⁴⁸ that the sin of the Golden Calf was a consequence of the Jews, at the **Giving of the Torah**, having beheld the face of the ox in the *Merkavah*.⁴⁹ This is puzzling in the extreme: While it is true that the sin of the Golden Calf “was a Royal decree” (as elaborated above), why and how could {such a sublime experience as} seeing (the face of the ox in) the *Merkavah* at the **Giving of the Torah** result in such a sin?

But based on the above discussion — that the purpose of the sin of the Golden Calf was to bring the Jews to the advantage of *teshuvah* — this is understandable, since the Jews’ *avodah* of *teshuvah* was a **continuation** of the revelation at the Giving of the Torah:

At the time of the Giving of the Torah, Hashem’s unity was revealed as a result of the revelation from “Above.” The *teshuvah* of the Jews for the sin of the Golden Calf (and the “Royal decree”) enabled this unity to also become revealed within the world below, even in the realm of sorcery which derive from the three totally impure *kelipos*.

⁴⁸ *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Ki Sisa*,” sec. 21; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 42, sec. 5.

⁴⁹ {The divine “chariot” from *Yechezkeil*’s vision, which contained four “faces” — human, lion, ox, and eagle — representing the spiritual infrastructure of Creation.}

14.

RECTIFYING THE HIGHEST THROUGH THE LOWEST

The elevation of the sparks within the **lowest** manifestation of evil through the *teshuvah* for the sin of the Golden Calf was expressed through the members of the mixed multitude who worshiped the Golden Calf who remained alive, and (also) did *teshuvah*.

The mixed multitude — who “became corrupt and corrupted others,” and are considered instigators and inciters, about whom the Torah of truth says⁵⁰ that we do not try to exonerate by looking for mitigating considerations — stem from the three totally impure *kelipos*, which are completely evil, without a shred of good in them. Their *teshuvah* represents {the ultimate expression of} “intentional sins becoming merits” — transforming darkness into light.

This is the inner meaning of “(Go) ascend from here (you and the people whom you brought up from the land of Egypt)”: The ascent is from “**from here**” — the elevation that resulted from the sin of the Golden Calf.⁵¹ This elevation is evident in the fact that the mixed multitude were rectified and elevated to holiness, transformed from “**your** people” into “the people.”

⁵⁰ *Sanhedrin* 29a; Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:14.

⁵¹ {The nuance the Rebbe is highlighting, “from here,” doesn't just mean to depart and transcend the sin of the Golden Calf, but moreover, the ascent is “from — i.e., brought about through — here.”}

15.

SANCTIFIED BY AN OX

Haftorahs are usually thematically “similar to the *parshah*”⁵² — and this point is also evident in the *haftorah* of *parshas Ki Sisa*⁵³ — the incident of Eliyahu on Mt. Carmel:

Regarding the ox that was “offered for Baal,” our Sages say⁵⁴ that it refused to be led {to the altar}, “saying to Eliyahu... the other one (Eliyahu’s ox) is being offered for Hashem and Hashem’s name is being sanctified through it, and I was selected {to be offered} for Baal, to anger my Creator.” Eliyahu responded, “Just as the name of the Holy One is sanctified by the one {i.e., the ox} that is with me, so, too, is His name sanctified by you.”

The simple meaning of this teaching: Just as Eliyahu’s ox sanctified Hashem’s name by the miracle that occurred when it was offered⁵⁵ — demonstrating in **a revealed way** the legitimacy of Eliyahu’s prophecy — the ox “selected for Baal” also sanctified Hashem’s name when “there was no {Heavenly} voice and no answer”⁵⁶ when it was brought. This demonstrated the **falsehood** of Baal’s prophets (and conversely, the truth of Hashem).

This is still not entirely clear: The wording of the *Midrash* — “**Just as** Hashem’s name is sanctified by the one that is with me, **so, too**, is His name sanctified by you” — implies that the sanctification of Hashem’s name achieved through both oxen was equivalent. Seemingly, the sanctification of Hashem’s name through Eliyahu’s ox, occurred through and with the actual ox. Hashem’s truth was revealed **though** the ox being accepted and consumed miraculously as a sacrifice. In contrast, the sanctification “of Hashem’s name” by the ox “selected

⁵² *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” beg. of sec. 284; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, beg. of sec. 284 (and end of sec. 283).

⁵³ *Melachim I* 18:20 and on.

⁵⁴ *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 23, sec. 9; *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Melachim I*, *Remez* 214; cited in *Radak* (and Rashi), *Melachim I* 18:26.

⁵⁵ {That fire came down from Heaven and consumed it.}

⁵⁶ *Melachim I* 18:26, 29.

for Baal” was achieved passively — **not** being consumed as a sacrifice demonstrated that Baal was **not** legitimate.

The explanation: Through Eliyahu’s *avodah* (and his achievement — that the Jews did *teshuvah*), Hashem’s unity was **revealed** below ({as highlighted by the resulting declaration of the Jewish people} “Hashem is the L-rd”⁵⁷) as it is from the perspective of “Above.” And since from the perspective of “Above,” the “word of Hashem,” the inner purpose and purpose of (everything in) the world is uncovered, therefore, Eliyahu said, “**Just as** Hashem’s name is sanctified by the one that is with me, **so, too** is His name sanctified by you” — the **same** unity. [For through *teshuvah*, the inner purpose of the ox brought for the sake of Baal was revealed — the (spark within the) ox was elevated to holiness.]

16.

PRACTICAL LESSON

This also leads us to a practical lesson: There are those who engage only in affairs that are holy from the outset — professing that this is the way to sanctify “Hashem’s name.”

But when it comes to deterring someone from sinning, such a person does nothing about it. But as the Alter Rebbe explains,⁵⁸ **every** transgression stands in utter opposition to the Supernal will and is comparable to the prohibition of idol worship. Yet, he protests, saying that he doesn’t want any involvement with an “ox of idolatry.”

In response, we say: “Just as Hashem’s name is sanctified by the one that is **with me**,⁵⁹ **so, too**, it is sanctified by you.”⁶⁰ Hashem’s unity becomes revealed specifically when we “take the precious out of the **vile**,”⁶¹ by inspiring

⁵⁷ *Melachim I* 18:39.

⁵⁸ *Tanya*, ch. 24.

⁵⁹ {I.e., the righteous.}

⁶⁰ {I.e., the transformation of sinners.}

⁶¹ *Yirmiyahu* 15:19; see *Bava Metzia* 85a.

those who need to do *teshuvah* to do so. Through this, intentional sins become merits.

Even more: Eliyahu first gave the ox “selected for Baal” to the prophets of Baal for them to attempt to offer it. Only afterward did Eliyahu offer his ox. That is, the *avodah* of sanctifying “Hashem’s name” using the ox that was “selected for Baal” **preceded** sanctifying Hashem’s name “by the one that is **with me.**”

The same is true regarding every individual’s *avodah*: Even when the *avodah* of bringing close a Jew who is {spiritually} distant sometimes requires taking time away from one’s own Torah study and *avodah* (“the one that is with me”), we must know that Hashem’s name must be sanctified by elevating the ox “that was selected for the Baal” — positively influencing a Jew who is distant from Judaism — **just as** “Hashem’s name is sanctified by the one that is with me,” through his own Torah and *avodah*.

By engaging in this two-fold *avodah*, similar to the events in the **Torah’s** narrative about Eliyahu, who will announce the Redemption, we will hasten the complete and ultimate redemption, so that it unfolds very soon.

— Based on talks delivered on *Shabbos parshas Ki Sisa* 5731 (1971), *Shavuos* 5724 (1964), *Shabbos parshas Shemos* 5736 (1975)