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To Offer Sacrifice in the Heavenly Temple



The Sefirotic Ascent

in the

Shaharit Morning Prayer Service

By Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok

Introduction

Many profound and sublime Kabbalistic secrets are encoded in the Shaharit Morning Prayer service recited daily by observant Jews. How unfortunate that most people who pray these prayers, as required by Jewish law, have no understanding of what it is their prayers accomplish in worlds and dimensions unseen to the human eye.

Jewish prayer services are considered to be too long and cumbersome by those who do not understand them. Shaharit, the daily morning service usually takes up about one hundred pages in most siddurim (prayerbooks). In order to recite all the prayers, many synagogues rush through the services in much less than a devotional way. How long it takes to pray is irrelevant. What is most essential is one's state of devotion (kavana).

According to Halakha (Jewish Law), one is required to pray with kavana (devotion). Unfortunately, this is one law that is

seldom observed correctly. These are the words that Rabbi Yosef Karo wrote in his **Shulkhan Arukh (Orah Haim 98:1)**:

"One who prays must devote his heart to the meaning of the words that come forth from one's mouth. One must imagine that the Shekhina (Divine Presence) stands opposite him. All extraneous thought must be removed so that one's thoughts and intent in prayer will be pure.

One should imagine as if one is speaking to a king of flesh and blood before whom one's words would be prepared and conscientious, G-d forbid to make a mistake. Even more so [should one be careful] before the King, Who is the King of kings, Who examines every thought.

Thus was the way of the pious and men of renown; they would meditate and direct their attention to their prayers until they reached the level of detachment from the physical world and the dominance of the

power of mind. They would almost come to the level of prophecy.

If another thought comes to one during prayer, one should be silent until that thought is nullified. One must meditate upon those things that humble the heart and direct [one's heart] to his Heavenly Father."

In order to assist those who pray daily I will outline here the Kabbalistic meaning and order of the daily morning service, Shaharit. My purpose is to expose to the daily daveners (those who pray) what it is that they are doing kabbalistically. My hope is that these revelations might deepen our collective state of awe and wonder about prayer and inspire us to perform our holy acts with greater devotion (kavana) and thus fulfill our Halakhic obligations.

The secrets of prayer are hinted to in the Holy Zohar and fully expounded upon by the great master Kabbalists, Rabbi Yitzhak Luria (the Ari'zal) and Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (the Rashash). The works of these two holy servants of G-d reveal that our prayers are far more than mere words recited by us. Indeed our prayers are heavenly sacrifices, and with them, we rectify worlds.

The Ari'zal's foremost student, the master Kabbalist Rabbi Haim Vital codified the bulk of the lessons he received from his teacher in his "*Sefer Etz Haim*" and the "*Shemoneh Sha'arim*" (The Eight Gates). The topic of prayer was specifically covered in three works: the sixth gate, entitled "*Sha'ar HaKavanot*", another version of this text entitled, "*Pri Etz Haim*", and a smaller, yet equally important work entitled, "*Olat Tamid*". These texts will be the source of the information included herein.

Throughout his writings Rabbi Haim explains to us *why* it is that we pray. After all, G-d is omniscient. He does know all of our needs, with or without our having to remind Him, blessed be He. So, there must be a purpose for prayer other than to simply make requests for this or that thing. Indeed there is.

The Primordial Worlds

& the Creation of the Purpose of Prayer

In the teachings of the Ari'zal it is explained that, in the very beginning, prior to the creation of Heaven and earth, G-d created other worlds and realms.¹ Heaven and earth relate to those levels which we call the physical and (using the modern "new age" term) the astral. Yet, there are numerous realms and dimensions above these.

Prior to the creation of our realms and dimensions, G-d created others. We can simplify things about these prior dimensions and call them the realms of darkness. For the verse in Gen. 1:3 speaks of G-d creating light out of darkness. Gen. 1:2 makes it quite clear that the existence of darkness predated the existence of light. The first creation in the realms and dimensions we recognize as time and space was light. But prior to light existed the realms and dimensions of darkness.

Darkness was an essential ingredient in creation. For without the preexistence of darkness no light could have become manifest. No light and there would be no universe for us. So in order for our universe to exist, darkness was created, prior to light, so that light could become manifest shining out of darkness.

In order for there to be light it's opposite also had to be in existence. For something without its opposite is not recognizable.

Indeed, the primordial world of darkness,² which "gave birth" to the realm of light, itself was "born" out of a previously existing realm of light.³ So, first came light, then

¹ Throughout the writings of the Ari'zal, especially in the *Etz Haim*, *Sha'ar HaHakdamot*, *Otzrot Haim* and *Mevo Sha'arim*, there are numerous detailed lectures about these pre-physical worlds. These worlds are referred to as the realms of the Akudim, Nikudim and Berudim. For more information regarding them, in English reference my *Panu Derekh*, issue 13, or the Hebrew originals.

² Olam HaNikudim

³ Olam HaAkudim

came darkness, then came light anew.⁴ This is the spiritual history of our world.

Yet, the Ari'zal relates that this primordial realm of the "first light" had limitations within it that led to the creation of darkness. These limitations were metaphorically called by the Ari'zal the "broken vessels". This set of terms the Ari'zal simply adopted from the holy Zohar.

In *Sefer Etz Haim*, Rabbi Haim expounds that when the original light shined below into the realm of the primordial vessels, these vessels were not properly aligned to receive this great light. When the light entered the unprepared vessels, the vessels shattered and their pieces "fell" into the lower realms (which would only come into manifestation later). This was the creation of darkness.

When the vessels broke, the primordial light returned above to its source in the supernal worlds above. Yet, there were sparks of the light that were entrapped in the shattered vessels and fell along with them into the lower realms. Thus light became entrapped in darkness.

G-d's great purpose in creating mankind was for us to be His agents and to sift out the fallen sparks of light from among the shattered vessels. Mankind's original purpose was to thus continue the work of creation by separating the light from the darkness that encased it. As G-d originally created the light and brought it out of darkness, so must we, mankind, follow suit.

To accomplish this task, mankind was created, first as a single spiritual being (Adam HaRishon) with collective, universal consciousness. Adam's purpose was to "tend to the garden". This is the Biblical metaphor used to describe our function as gatherers of the encased light.

Yet as we see by the presence of the serpent in the Garden, not everything in Eden was pure and kosher. The serpent was the

embodiment of the fallen vessels. He opposed the work of man because the fallen vessels only maintain their lives through the amount of light that they have within them that fell with them below.

In order to sustain their lives the forces of darkness need more light. Rather than allow mankind to re-gather the light and thus restore the primordial pattern, the serpent, as the agent of evil, desired more light so as to grow stronger. He accomplished this by stealing Adam's light. This is what the Bible refers to as the Fall. We are still picking up the pieces of this second Fall to this day.

The serpent confused Eve and then Adam into eating of the metaphorical "Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil". The Kabbalists make it quite clear that this was no mere physical tree. Thus it is a waste of time to debate whether the forbidden fruit was an apple, grape or fig. It was none of these. Indeed the forbidden fruit was not even physical. As the name of the Tree implies, the forbidden fruit was knowledge, itself. For what more than human intellect has brought our race to the highest heights and what more than the lack of intellect has brought our race to the lowest lows. Knowledge or the lack thereof, is indeed good and evil.

By entrapping our minds, the serpent stole the light of our intellects. Pure thought is always called enlightenment, from the word "light". The connection between spiritual fulfillment and light is thus clearly evident even in the English words. Light is life and light is Mind. Mind brings us closer to G-d. Thus the pure mind is called the Neshama level of the soul, the true and Higher Self.

It is this level of our beings that the serpent detached us from so that he could benefit from its abundant light and not us. So as long as we as a race remain ignorant of our true Selves, our true purpose and our true nature, we continue feeding the serpent his meal of the light of our souls.

The original Adamic purpose was thus thwarted. But G-d cannot be thwarted.

⁴ Olam HaBerudim – Olam HaTikun

Prior to creation, the Holy One, blessed be He, already foresaw this chain of events and, in the beginning, created its solution. The universal solution for the lack of light is the Holy Torah.

G-d's greatest gift to mankind was the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Torah was the embodiment of light that would now guide our fallen intellects how to repair themselves. Once we ourselves have rectified our personal shortcomings, we can turn our attention to the world and rectify all. It is the Torah that enables us to recognize and find the entrapped sparks of light. Then we sift them out of the fallen vessels and return them to their proper place in the supernal realms.

The way that Torah ordained for us to sift and elevate these sparks was through the medium of sacrifice and service that was performed first in the Tabernacle and later in the holy Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Various types of offerings, of grain, incense and animal sacrifice were made daily. Each offering was an elevation not only of the physical matter of the object but also of the spiritual element engrained within it.

Each offering not only represented itself but also served as an archetype of many different types of life. Each offering, therefore, was much more than a simple sacrifice. Each offering was an offering for the sake of the universe and each served to rectify and re-balance the entrapped light and the shattered vessels.

Alas, we did not offer up enough light. Due to our many sins the holy Temple was destroyed and sacrifice and offerings ceased to be brought upon Jerusalem's holy altar. Yet, in spite of all the destruction, Temple offerings never really ceased, they merely changed form.

Prayer, the True Sacrificial Offering

In the holy *Talmud*, (*Bavli Berakhot 26B*), our Sages discussed the reasons why the three daily prayer services were ordained. Rabbi Yosi, the son of Rabbi Hanina says

that the patriarchs Abraham, Yitzhak and Ya'aqob ordained the three services. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi says that the prayer services correspond to and take the place of the Temple sacrifices.

Indeed the patriarchs did ordained the daily prayer services. Yet, what Rabbi Yehoshua reveals to us is that these prayers, that we have been reciting for centuries are far more than simple words of supplication. It is the prayers themselves that are the true sacrificial offerings. Many times is this hinted to in the Bible. And now comes Rabbi Yehoshua, a master Kabbalist in his own right, and reveals to us what the real meaning of prayer always has been.

It is the performance of prayer that sifts out the fallen sparks and elevates them to their supernal sources above. Yet, it is not enough to simply accept this teaching on faith. In order to allow prayer to fully perform its function, there must be understanding as to *how* and *why* it replaces sacrifice and *how* it elevates the fallen sparks.

What exactly is the nature of the entrapped sparks of light held captive in the fallen vessels. As referenced above, the light is not exactly a form of photon emissions as is the visible light seen by the human eye. The spiritual light spoken of here appears to be related to knowledge. Light is enlightenment. Enlightenment is an acquirement of knowledge of a certain nature. Light, therefore, is knowledge. Again we see why the serpent caused Adam to sin with the Tree of Knowledge and thereby did Adam loose his light. Light is knowledge. It is the awareness of truth. Entrapped light simply means perverted knowledge, i.e., knowledge that is not accurate or correct. Corruption of knowledge was the result of the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

The Ari'zal teaches that the shattered vessels fell into the "lower realms" which today we call the dimensions of thought, feeling and action. These dimensions the Kabbalists call the "worlds" of Beriah

(thought), Yetzirah (feeling) and Asiyah (action). The original light was of the spiritual dimension, called by the Kabbalists: Atzilut.

Thus the light from Atzilut (spirit) fell and became entangled in the lower realms of thought (Beriah), feeling (Yetzirah) and action (Asiyah). In other words, the shattering of the vessels was the creation of misguided and incorrect thoughts, feelings and actions. The entrapped light is the good intentions, which are misinterpreted and misused motivating bad actions, feelings and thoughts.

The way to sift out and rectify the entrapped light is to release good intentions from bad forms of manifestation. This is accomplished by our performing correct actions, which have a direct affect upon the way we think, how we feel and what we do. For this purpose did G-d provide for us the mitzvot of the Torah, to guide us in the right path, to rectify that which is wrong.

Temple sacrifice originally performed this task. Now, it is our prayers.

The Four Dimensional Realms

Mankind is a unique creation in that we traverse and include within us aspects of all the four worlds Atzilut (spirit), Beriah (thought), Yetzirah (emotion) and Asiyah (action). When the vessels shattered and fell out of the spiritual realm of Atzilut, G-d needed to create a type of being who would have its origins in the spiritual realm of Atzilut, yet have the ability to delve into the lower worlds without getting lost and forgetting the way home. The various races of angels do not have this capability. Any angel who attempted to stay in the lower worlds for any length of time eventually became corrupted. The angelic races do not contain all four levels in their makeup; therefore, any descent on their part from their home domain to any below it means a disconnection from their source.

Mankind, the human race has the potential of elevating that which has fallen and not become corrupted by doing so. Yet, the maintenance of the operation can only be

accomplished by our "lifeline" which connects us to our source. This, of course, is the Torah. All the while that we are in the physical world, we loose sight of our original spiritual status. We become surrounded by mistaken thoughts, feelings and actions. Even though our intentions are pure, our actions do not properly manifest our noble intentions.

The Torah came from outside of the realm of the fallen. As such it is our "lifeline". Torah accomplishes this purpose by restoring our light. This is accomplished by rectifying our spirits and minds. Thus all the laws of Torah revolve around one major matter. We are commanded over and over again *to remember!*

Many commandments of the Torah are geared towards reminding us of our true spiritual status. Indeed, the entire service of the Temple, all the sacrifices and service was to teach us about the inner workings of our psyches and soul.⁵

All creation can be divided into four distinct levels or worlds, which are:

1. **Atzilut** – the realm of spirit
2. **Beriah** – the realm of thought
3. **Yetzirah** – the realm of feeling
4. **Asiyah** – the realm of action.

Each and every thing in creation, no matter how grand or how small contains elements of these four levels. There are the four levels in general (klalli) and each level is sub-divided into four specific (prati) levels.

Thus there is the general world of Atzilut. Yet, within Atzilut there are the specific realms of the Asiyah of Atzilut, the Yetzirah of Atzilut, the Beriah of Atzilut and the Atzilut of Atzilut.

Every species, including angels contain four specific (prati) worlds within their makeup. Yet, only mankind contains all four worlds in general (klalli). Only mankind, therefore, can retrieve the fallen sparks of light, also called the sparks of holiness.

⁵ Rabbi Haim of Volozhin, the prime student of the master Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, writes about this in his Nefesh HaHaim. which will be quoted shortly.

Even the physical world around us is made up of the four levels:

1. The **Asiyatic portions of the physical** world are the inanimate objects such as earth and water.
2. The **Yetziratic portion of the physical** world is the vegetation.
3. The **Beriatic portion of the physical** world is the animal kingdom.
4. The **Atzilutic portion of the physical** world is mankind.

Corresponding to these was the service in the holy Temple ordained:

1. Sacrifices were offered **from inanimate objects** such as water. This was an Asiyatic offering.
2. There were many kinds of **grain offerings**, which were Yetziratic.
3. **Animal sacrifices** were Beriatic.
4. The **Kohanim** (the Aronite priesthood) themselves were the Atzilutic component.

All four of these were the four specific portions of the physical realm of Asiyah.

The singing of the Levites was the general portion of Yetzirah.

The recitation of sections of Torah was the general portion of Beriah.

Prayer was the general portion of Atzilut. Each of the four, of course, had within them their specific parts.

The Shaharit morning prayer service today is rather different from how it used to be during Temple times. During Temple times, the Kohen priests would perform their sacrifices and the Levites would sing their songs. The common Jew would simply recite prayers like the Shema Yisrael.

With the destruction of the holy Temple and the cessation of daily sacrifices, the layman Israelite would have to not only fill his own role but those of the Kohen and the Levite. How can this be? The specific service of the Kohen priest and Levite are forbidden to the layman Israelite. Nonetheless, like his priestly counterpart, the layman Israelite has inherent holiness. He can indeed

perform the priestly role of the Kohen and of the Levite, but they must be done in a slightly different manner.

While the layman is forbidden to perform the actions of the Kohen priest and Levite in the physical Temple, he is by no means forbidden to perform their spiritual counterparts. Indeed, Rabbi Haim of Volozhin, the prime student of the master Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, writes in the following quote from his ***Nefesh HaHaim (gate 1, chapter 4)*** that the layman Jew is supposed to perform the spiritual counterpart of the physical Temple service. This is the responsibility and duty of every Jew.

"Do not think that the purpose of the building of the tabernacle (was for the sake of) having an external building. Rather, know that HaShem's desire and purpose (in the building of) the tabernacle, and all its vessels was to hint to us that we should observe them and learn that (like the tabernacle vessels), it is we ourselves that are to be the tabernacle (of the Shekhina).

We, by our admirable actions must be a tabernacle, full of all its vessels, all being holy, worthy, and ready to have the Shekhina dwell within us specifically. This is the meaning of the verse, "Make for Me a tabernacle, and I will dwell within them" (Shemot 25, 8). "Within them" specifically, for as HaShem has shown us the order of the building of the tabernacle, so should we learn, and make ourselves to be the tabernacle of HaShem."

Coming Close To G-d Balancing Universal Energies

Our Sages had prophetic foreknowledge of the imminent destruction of the holy Temple and our long and bitter exile. They knew that each and every Jew would have to take upon themselves the spiritual responsibility of the entire nation. With their prophetic insight and by the authority vested in them by G-d they ordained and outlined the daily prayer services to be the spiritual replacement of the Temple service and sacrifice. Indeed, if not for the spiritual

intervention of our holy Sages, Temple sacrifice would have ceased with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 68 c.e.

Indeed, the Temple offerings have never ceased! They have merely changed their form. Instead of the Kohen priest making offerings of flesh and blood, we all now make offerings of spirit. Yet, this act on our parts is no mere symbolic act. Our spiritual offerings are quite real and actual. Yet, instead of offering physical matter, we perform the spiritual function for which the physical offering was ordained in the first place.

In order to understand this concept, I must digress to discuss the inherent nature of the relationship between different dimensional planes of matter and energy.

In the beginning, prior to the Fall, the Ari'zal teaches us that Adam's original body was constituted of light, and not flesh.⁶ Adam originally existed in the Yetziratic dimension and not the physical earthly dimension of Asiyah (as we do today). Thus the original human form was of some type of finer type of matter, or possibly an energy field. As a result of our interaction with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the original collective human soul was somehow affected in such a way that the vibrational elements in the original form became less fluid. The original form lost its fluidity of vibrational movement and the original body of light "hardened" into a body of flesh and blood. The original light body thus became encased or entrapped in a body of flesh and blood. Indeed this was an entirely new shattering of the vessels and the entrapment of sparks of light. This

⁶ For a full explanation of this matter reference *Sefer Ben Ish Hai by Rabbi Yosef Haim, Shana Rishona, Parashat Bereshit-Hakdama*. Here the Ben Ish Hai explains this matter directly from the Ari's writing and proceeds to connect it to the laws of the Talit. While Sefer Ben Ish Hai has been translated into English, all the Kabbalistic hakdamot (introductions) were left out by the translator who considered them inappropriate for translation. I have always disagreed with this decision and have made available these translations in previous issues of Panu Derekh. This one in question is translated in *Panu Derekh, issue #2*.

time the sparks of light were our souls. Due to the Fall, Adam, collective mankind, became stuck in the very situation that he was sent to repair. What were we to do?

G-d, in His great mercy did not abandon us, but rather gave taught us how to release ourselves from the prison of our present state of energy imbalance. When collective human consciousness became restricted due to the "fruit" of the Tree of Knowledge, our ability to perceive G-d and thus to fully interact with the universe became equally limited.

G-d permeates the entire universe and beyond. The closer one is to the "beyond", the greater and fuller the scope one has of the universe. Coming close to G-d means rising above the limitations created within the four realms of creation and to reconnect with the Source.

As physical beings, mankind "fell" into the lowest reaches of the created universe. This is more a blessing than a curse, but this will have to be discussed at another time. From here in the physical universe, mankind's collective destiny is to carry out the Adamic mission of finding, sifting and elevating the entrapped fallen sparks of holiness.

As physical beings we do not possess the innate knowledge to know how to do this. Therefore, G-d instructed us, i.e., He, Blessed be His name, gave us Torah. Torah, in Hebrew, means instruction. Upon his "fall" Adam was instructed by G-d how to repair what he had done and how to continue his mission from his now "fallen" state. The Fall had led to an imbalance of energy fields in the universe. In order for the universe to survive and thrive properly, the universal energy fields needed to be rebalanced and maintained.

Energy, therefore, had to travel between the dimensions in both vertical and horizontal directions so that the universal balance can be maintained. While this energy spoken of here is metaphysical energy, nonetheless, these same principles of energy apply to

physical matter. Indeed, this is the realm of science and the laws of nature.

The energy that we speak of, of course is the "Light of G-d". This energy field is best described as life force energy. This is the energy, which manifests sentience and consciousness. It is the energy of being. G-d's holy Name, YHWH, means "active being", therefore, this energy is none other than an expression and part of G-d, Himself, blessed be He.

The job of collective Adam is to elevate the sparks of holiness and to bring down into the physical universe the continuing light of G-d. The Torah calls this light of G-d that we draw down into the physical universe: **Kedusha (holiness)**. This is the true life force energy without which nothing can connect with G-d and elevate or evolve.

As mentioned above, the fallen sparks of holiness became entrapped in the shattered vessels. These shattered vessels are the perverted forms of the lower three worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah. Beriah is the world of thought. Yetzirah is the world of emotion (feelings). Asiyah is the world of action. Therefore, perverted thoughts are the fallen vessels of Beriah. Perverted feelings are the fallen vessels of Yetzirah. Perverted actions are the fallen vessels of Asiyah. Yet, within them all there might be the best of intentions, although it is encased in a shell which blocks it's true form of manifestation. **This is why the perverted forms are called in Hebrew: Klipot (husks or shells, klipah-sing.),** for they surround the good intent and conceal it like a shell or husk conceals the good fruit within it.

The definition of true "good intent" can never be defined by "fallen" man; therefore, G-d has revealed to us His blessed Law (instructions, i.e., Torah). G-d's law teaches us what is correct thinking, correct feelings and correct action. When we humans live our lives according to the path of Torah we enable the universal energies to flow horizontally and vertically according to their innate Divinely ordained patterns.

When we do not follow the Torah, we create anew sparks of light becoming entrapped in fallen vessels. And for this are we held accountable.

The great rule of the universe is that G-d balances things "*midah k'neged midah*" (measure for measure). When our mistaken actions, feelings and thoughts entrap sparks of light, the universe views this as an act of theft. As we steal light from the universe and entrap it in the perverted vessels, our punishment is that we have to return light to the universe.

Light is life. When we steal light from the universe, we are stealing life force energy. Thus the penalty is to return life force energy to the universe. Now, we cannot create life force energy (light). Indeed we can only possess it, and then only in small amounts. Thus, when we sin and violate a law of Torah setting into motion a series of universal energy imbalances, we must restore light to the universe. The only way the law of the universe can thus be fulfilled is for us to give up our individual life force. In other words, when we sin, we must die so as to re-align that which we individually misaligned.

The problem with this is that in our fallen state, we can never know what is a sin and what is not. Certainly no one would be able to live a normal human life span. Somewhere along the line, most likely sooner than later, we would all make mistakes. The human race would therefore cease to exist.

G-d, in His wisdom and more specifically His mercy, ordained for us a system that would answer the demands of universal justice and balance and provide for us an opportunity to re-align the energy fields without having to die in order to do it. Thus sacrifice and offerings were ordained. They take our place.

Let me quickly interject here that this state of spiritual affairs has absolutely nothing to do with the allegations made by the Christian religion about their "savior" being

רמ"ע , לול רס"ח
א אר"ב זמ"ת פ"ג , ח"ג א , ח"ב , ח"א
An Abridged Form of the
Kabbalistic Kavanot for Shaharit
From Kitvei HaAri'zal & Siddur HaRashash

Introduction, Translation & Commentary by
Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok

Our Sages have arranged the Shaharit prayer service to follow the map of the four worlds. Different parts of the service correlate to the different dimensions and to the specific levels within each dimension. In essence, the prayer service forms a pyramid in that during the first half we are in ascent to the summit. At the top of the prayer (the central section – the Amidah) we perform a special duty and then prepare our descent down into the physical world and the level of human consciousness that corresponds to it.

In order to make this order of prayer easy to understand and easy to follow and practice, I will outline the general structure of ascent of the Shaharit morning service and then I will repeat the order in greater details.

The Kabbalistic Order of Shaharit Preparations

We have learned above that there are four major dimensions in creation. These are from above to below:

- 1. Atzilut – the realm of spirit**
- 2. Beriah – the realm of mind**
- 3. Yetzirah – the realm of emotion**
- 4. Asiyah – the realm of action**

Mankind includes all four of these aspects within us. Therefore, the ladder of ascent in prayer must ascend through all four of these worlds.

The level of prayer corresponds to the fourth realm of Atzilut, the dimension of spirit. This is because Atzilut encompasses the other three realms in the same way that the spiritual aspect of Adamic man encompasses his thoughts, feelings and actions.

In order to ascend through the four realms one cannot begin at the end, i.e., the top. Therefore, prayer, which corresponds to the general realm of Atzilut, requires preparatory steps corresponding to the lower three worlds of Asiyah, Yetzirah and Beriah. These steps are necessary in order to raise the fallen sparks of holiness and to restore them through our Atzilutic service.

Upon Awakening

Prior to beginning prayer certain things are required of us. To begin with, upon awakening in the morning our first action of the day (after the initial washing of our hands to remove the unclean spirit attached to us in sleep) is to relieve ourselves by performing our bodily functions. After which we again wash our hands in a prescribed manner and recite the blessing "*Asher Yatzar*"⁸ thanking G-d that our bodily functions are in good

⁸ This and all other prayers can be found in any Orthodox prayerbook. Whether it be Sephardic, Ashkenazi or Hasidic (Nusah Sefard) all siddurs have the same prayers, although they might not be arranged in Kabbalistic order.

working order. This first order of action on our parts internally cleanses our physical body and by the ritual washing of hands cleanses our "astral" body. This action in Hebrew is called "**Yifneh V'Yitol**" (relieving and washing). This action loosens up the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Asiyah** and prepares them to ascend.

Immediately after washing our hands we recite the hand washing blessing, the bathroom blessing (Asher Yatzar) and then we recite (without interruption) the *Birkot HaShahar* (the 18 morning blessings, including the blessings of the Torah).

The Talit

After getting dressed and prior to going to the synagogue one puts on the *Talit Gadol* with the appropriate "*L'Shem Yihud*" and "*Berakha*". The *Talit Katan* (small tzitzit worn under our shirts) is put on while getting dressed. The Sephardic minhag (tradition) is to not say a separate blessing over it (as do the Ashkenazim). We Sephardim recite one blessing over the Talit Gadol and intend for this blessing to include the Talit Katan. This is the correct procedure according to the Kabbalah.

The Talit Gadol is our spiritual garment. It covers our torso, arms and thighs. Thus the Talit Gadol cloaks the area corresponding in our bodies to the six sefirot Hesed through Yesod. These are the sefirot of the realm of Yetzirah. Thus the Talit Gadol clothes our astral body as the physical clothing clothes our physical bodies. The wearing of the **Talit Gadol** loosens up the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Yetzirah** and prepares them to ascend.

The Tefillin

We then proceed to put on the Tefillin with the appropriate "*L'Shem Yihud*" and "*Berakha*". The Sephardic tradition is to place the hand Tefillin on the left arm, in the place where it is to be tied and to then recite the blessing. This is to be performed while being seated. According to Kabbalistic tradition as outlined in the *Kaf HaHaim* law code, even left handed men should place the Tefillin on their left arms and not on

their right as is the non-Kabbalistic tradition.

The Tefillin is placed on the left arm opposite the heart and upon the head, just above the hairline, directly between one's eyes. The Tefillin of the arm are the "female" Tefillin. It is worn on the left arm opposite the heart because the "heart" is the "place" of the sefirotic "Head" (i.e., the sefirat Keter) of the "Feminine" attribute called the Shekhina. The head Tefillin is worn above the hairline (or where the hairline originally was if you are like me) because this is the place of the sefirot Binah and Hokhma, the mohin.

Indeed, according to Kabbalistic tradition, two sets of very small Tefillin are worn together, side by side, on the arm and upon the head. This ancient tradition is subtly hinted to in the Talmud and was possibly observed at Masada (where two small sets of Tefillin of this nature were found). The two sets are called Rashi and Rabbeynu Tam, named after the two rabbis who endorsed the different traditions.

The only difference between the two sets of Tefillin is in the order of the Torah scroll parchments written within them. According to the Rashi tradition, the scrolls should be written in the order that they appear in the Torah. According to Rabbeynu Tam this order is followed with the exception that the Shema Yisrael prayer is placed last instead of third. The only other difference between the two is the location of the small hairs that jut out of the head Tefillin box. On the Rashi, the hairs jut out between the third and fourth sections. In the Rabbeynu Tam, the hairs jut out one section over to the right.

Jewish Law has dictated that the Rashi Tefillin are the ones to be worn. Many who are pious will acquire a set of Rabbeynu Tam Tefillin and put them on in place of their Rashi Tefillin towards the end of the morning service. This tradition is observed by Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike. Yet, there are other traditions. There is at least one school of Hasidim that observe traditions of their own making which are

Kavanot HaTefillin (Rashi)

For the **Head Tefillin** contemplate that there are 21 mentions of the Name V"wh in the four parchments of the Tefillin. 21 is the Gematria of the Name V"ht. Thus we contemplate the Name V"ht which represents the 21 mentions of the Name. Then we contemplate the Name V"wh itself, then upon the four letters of V"ht corresponding to the four parchments themselves.

For the **Hand Tefillin** contemplate upon the Name V"ht corresponding to the number 21. Then contemplate the Name V"wh as mentioned above. Finally contemplate the Name Hbst which is the Name of the Shekhina, because the Hand Tefillin rests upon "Her Head".

The three Names of the Head Tefillin: V"ht V"wh V"ht in Gematria equal 68, which is Ohj Haim, Life.

The three Names of the Hand Tefillin V"ht V"wh Hbst in Gematria equal 112, which is e"ChYabok, a holy Name which in Gematria equals the union of the two Names V"wh and O"vkt.

Together all six Names: V"ht V"wh V"ht of the Head Tefillin and V"ht V"wh Hbst of the Hand Tefillin together in Gematria equal the three spellings of V"whAB, SAG & MAH:

VV UVV SH ,HV UtUHV SH ,HV UHV SH

In the *Siddur HaRashash* this kavana is placed upon almost every page so that you will always remember that the holy Tefillin are upon you. In the Siddur the kavana (for Rashi) appears like this:

V"ht V"wh V"ht
Hbst V"wh V"ht
VV UVV SH HV UtUHV SH HV UHV SH

totally removed from the Kabbalah of the Ari'zal. Some wear types of Tefillin the Kabbalah of the Ari'zal never mentions!⁹

Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of the Shulkhan Arukh has written that one who is pious and renown for their great deeds may wear both sets together at the same time according to an ancient custom.¹⁰ Yet, the Kabbalah says that every man¹¹ must

⁹ I do not wish to mention this group by name for fear of causing controversy. They proclaim themselves to be well versed in Kabbalah, yet very few of them have actually study the writings of the Ari'zal directly. Some of the traditions of this group are contrary to the Ari'zal in spite of their claims to follow the Ari'zal's traditions. Two examples will suffice here. First, this group does not wear the Shemusha Rabbah Tefillin that the Sha'ar HaKavanot stipulates to be worn at Minha (the afternoon service). Second, when this group washes "mayim aharonim" they wipe their wet fingers on their lips. According to the torah of the Ari'zal, this brings the klipot into one's mouth – a horrible and forbidden thing to do.

¹⁰ Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Haim 34:2.

¹¹ Reference the Kaf HaHaim commentary to this section.

wear both sets and that this is a great "tikkun" (rectification) for the level of the "mohin" sefirot (Hokhma and Binah). Some modern Sephardic rabbis, like HaRav Ovadiah Yosef have written against observing this treasured Kabbalistic tradition. It is in this and related areas that the Halakha does not have to follow the opinions of HaRav Ovadiah. One should instead stay true to the Kabbalistic dictums as outlined by all of the other Sephardic Sages.

The **Tefillin** upon the head (of the male and of the female) loosen up the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Beriah** and prepares them to ascend.

With the action of *Yifneh V'Yitol, Talit and Tefillin*, we are now ready to elevate the fallen sparks into Atzilut. The realm of Atzilut is reached through the vehicle of prayer.

This then is the order:

1. **General Asiyah - Yifneh V'Yitol**
2. **General Yetzirah – Talit Gadol V'Katan**
3. **General Beriah – Tefillin Yad V'Rosh**
4. **General Atzilut – Tefilah (prayer)**

The Spiritual Mechanics of Prayer

As mentioned above, even Atzilut is subdivided into four specific “sub-realms”. These are the specific or subjective realms of Asiyah, Yetzirah, Beriah and Atzilut within the realm of the general Atzilut.

In brief, through our thoughts and intentions we ascend through the four worlds of Atzilut during Shaharit. But for what purpose do we ascend? Without knowledge and awareness of this, no prayer will successfully ascend.

Our purpose in prayer is simply to elevate the fallen sparks of holiness that have become entrapped in our physical worlds. Where are these sparks? They are encased in our mistaken actions, feelings and thoughts.

Thus, prayer must motivate us to change our actions, feelings and thoughts. Prayer accomplishes this task through the words that we speak and our intentions when we speak them.

When we take to heart the meaning of what we are saying in prayer, it really opens our minds and hearts. This releases our good intentions (the holy sparks) from their inaccurate applications, thus the elevation. But this is all in the world of Atzilut.

Being that the holy sparks have fallen into all four realms, as referred to above, so our prayers “sift” our intentions in each of these levels.

The Four Levels of Ascent

The four basic levels of ascent in the Shaharit Morning Prayer service are:

1. **The Korbanot** – the initial readings of the sacrificial offerings.
2. **The Zemirot** – the reading of the Psalms of praise.

3. **The Kriyat Shema** – the reading of our pledge of faith, the Shema Yisrael.
4. **The Amidah** – the eighteen blessings, the center and pinnacle of the prayer service.

The relationship of these sections correlate to the worlds as follows:

1. **Korbanot** – rectify and elevate the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Asiyah**.
2. **Zemirot** - rectify and elevate the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Yetzirah**.
3. **Shema** - rectify and elevate the sparks of holiness that have fallen into **Beriah**.
4. **Amidah** – the restoration of the fallen sparks into **Atzilut**.

After donning the Talit and Tefillin in one's home, one proceeds to shul to daven in a minyan (quorum of ten). The only excuse to pray at home without a minyan is to pray with the rising of the sun in a place where there is no minyan. This will be discussed later in detail.

Upon arriving at shul (synagogue), one enters therein with a sense of awe and foreboding. We begin by reciting the “L'Shem Yihud” prayer for Shaharit that was ordained by Avraham Avinu. After this, the Arizal, has ordained that we recite the following:

“Behold I accept upon myself the positive commandment to “love my neighbor as myself” and to love everyone of the children of Israel as my soul and my might. Behold I offer my mouth to pray before the King, who is the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.”

We then follow the prayer service keeping in mind where we are at in the greater scheme of spiritual ascent.

The Ascent as Outlined in the Kabbalistic Siddur

The ascent through prayer is described in the siddur by using the different corresponding holy Names of G-d. These change as we ascend through the worlds. A

quick review of the holy Names used in prayer follows.

The holy Name of G-d, YHWH, manifests uniquely in each of the four dimensional realms. In order to distinguish at which level G-d's Name is being perceived, the Name is spelled in different expansion spellings, and referred to by its the Gematria (numerical value).

1. In **Atzilut**, YHWH is spelled out with the letter "Yod". Thus this name is called Havaya (the Name of YHWH) of Yodin and better known by its Gematria 72. This name is called **AB**.¹²

he uhe suh

2. In **Beriah**, YHWH is spelled out with both the letters "Yod" and the letter Alef in the Vav. Thus this name is called **SAG**, Gematria 63.

he u uhe suh

3. In **Yetzirah**, YHWH is spelled out completely with the letter "Alef". This Name is called Havaya of Alfin and is known as **MAH**, Gematria 45.

te u te suh

4. In **Asiyah**, YHWH is spelled out completely with the letter "Hey". This Name is called Havaya of Hehin and is known as **BEN**, Gematria 52.

ee uee suh

The spark of holiness that fell into the klipot originally came from the Name YHWH of the realm of Atzilut. This Name is Havaya d'AB. AB, as we know is 72. The fall occurred in all four worlds. Therefore, the symbolic "number" of the fallen sparks of holiness is said to be $4 \times 7 = 288$. In Hebrew this is spelled j"pr and is called the **Rafah nitzotzin** (sparks).

Being that the fall was from the original holy Name YHWH, it is this Name, in all

¹² The Names written here in Hebrew have the letters "Hey" changed to the letter "Kof" so as to protect the Name's holiness.

four of its aspects, that is to be elevated. Therefore, visualization of the holy Name in each of its aspects is one of the ways the sparks are elevated.

The technique of elevating the worlds is by visualizing the specific Names of the sparks entrapped in each world. Each world, Asiyah, Yetzirah and Beriah also have holy Names that correlate to them.

The holy Name corresponding to Asiyah is:

h'bst kt

El Adonai

The holy Name corresponding to Yetzirah is:

euehkt

El YHWH

The holy Name corresponding to Beriah is:

h'sa kt

El Shadai

The Names of YHWH corresponding to the holy sparks, which have fallen into each of the worlds, must be visualized ascending through the worlds, specifically through the holy Names of each world.

There are also peripheral concepts that we are to keep in mind at the varying levels of ascent in the prayer. The full outline of these concepts, the holy Names and the pattern of ascent are neatly arranged in a Kabbalistic siddur entitled, "*Kavanot Pratiyot*" (Private Meditations). This lovely little text is published as part two of a larger work entitled, "*Sefer Benyahu Ben Yehoyada*", written by HaRav Haim Shaul Dwek HaKohen. The order of Kabbalistic prayer is outlined in accordance to the teachings of the Rashash, HaRav Shalom Sharabi.

A Summary of the Kavanot for the Order of Shacharit Morning Prayer From Siddur Benyahu Ben Yehoyada

Introduction

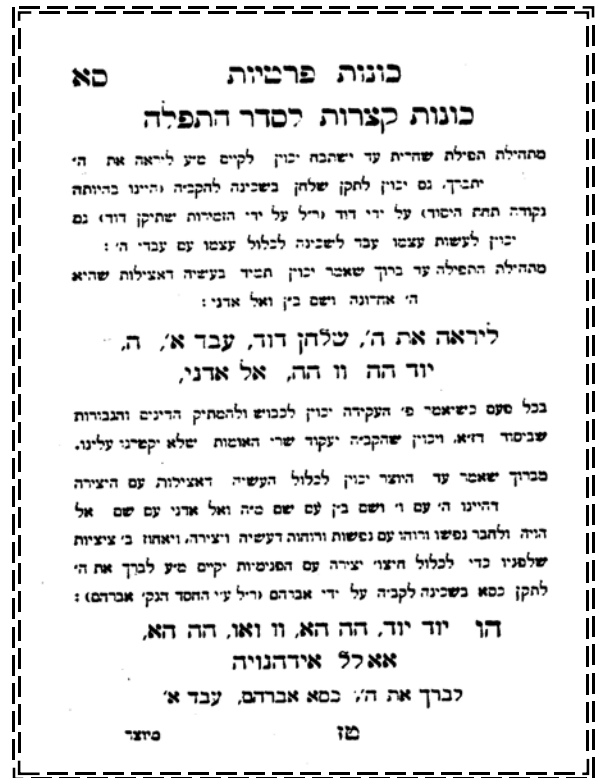
The following is a translation of an original Hebrew work on Kabbalistic meditation. I believe it is important that readers have exposure to original texts as much as is possible. Therefore, I have included the text here, with a commentary, based upon what was discussed above.

The text contains references to specific prayers in the morning service. Those of you familiar with the service will no doubt be very familiar with these prayers. Those of you who are not familiar with Jewish prayers may want to consult any Orthodox Hebrew-English prayerbook. There is a Sephardic siddur with English translation entitled, "Siddur Kol Sasson – The Orot Sephardic Weekday Siddur". It is very good text to learn from and I highly recommend its usage. Although this is a siddur only for weekday prayers, other versions are available for Shabat and holidays.

Kavanot Pratiyot 61A-B

Text: *Every time that you recite the Akedah meditate upon subjugating and sweetening the judgments and severities that are within the Yesod of ZA. Meditate that HaShem will remove the Princes of the nations so that they will no longer bring accusations against us.*

Commentary: This meditation is not discussed in more detail, nor are any holy Names applied here. The Akedah is the reading of the Torah story of Abraham's offering of Yitzhak. The holy Zohar ordained that this be read at the beginning of prayer to call upon G-d's mercy (as He showed to Abraham and Yitzhak). This is called the "sweetening of judgment". These "judgments" exist in the "Yesod of Z.A." which is where Divine judgment resides prior to its manifestation here on earth. Reciting the Akedah assists to neutralize



(sweeten) that Divine judgment which usually comes in the form of some type of social turmoil. Thus we ask that the angelic princes be removed for they are the ones who stir their respective nations to war.

The Asiyatic Realm

Text: *From the beginning of Shacharit to (the prayer entitled) Yishtabah, meditate upon fulfilling the positive commandment to fear blessed HaShem.*

By the songs that were ordained by David rectify the Shulkhan (table i.e. altar) of the Shekhina for HaShem (for She is now just one small point beneath the Yesod).

Also, meditate upon making oneself to be the servant of the Shekhina, and to include oneself amongst the servants of HaShem.

**Warning: for the next few pages actual holy Names are written.
Please respect these Names. Safeguard this work from damage.
Do not take it into any unclean place.**

Commentary: The text now puts all of these concepts into visual form by spelling and writing them out. First we are to fulfill the commandment to “fear G-d”. This is written in Hebrew:

"v , t vtrhk

We are then told to rectify the altar (which in Hebrew is called a table). It is said that the table (altar) corresponds to David, for David is King, who reigns over (the sefirat) Malkhut (Kingdom).

šš ij ka

“For She is now just one small point beneath the Yesod.” This means that the sefirat Malkhut, which is the realm of Asiyah is now “one small point”, meaning Asiyah stands alone, disconnected from the upper worlds. We must also keep in mind our servitude to G-d, so we write the words, “servant of G-d.”

"v scg

Text: From the beginning of prayer until Barukh Sh’Amar meditate upon the Asiyah of Atzilut, which is the final Hey, as well upon the Name BEN, and El Adonai.

Commentary: These are visualized using the Names above and are written together with all the previously mentioned concepts. They are written together like this:

"v scg šš ij ka "v , t vtrhk
hst kt 'vv uvv sh 'v

The Yetziratic Realm

Text: From Barukh Sh’Amar up until Yotzer, meditate upon elevating and

uniting the Asiyah of Atzilut with the Yetzirah of Atzilut. Hey with Vav, BEN with MAH, El Adonai with El Havaya.

Commentary: The technique of unification spoken of by the Kabbalists is performed by a specific type of visualizations upon the holy Names. In order to unite the supernal realms, they must be united through an act of conscious thought on our parts.

We cannot simply picture two words or sefirot being “mashed” together. This type of visualization actually causes great harm in the spiritual realms.

The correct type of visualization is to see in your mind’s eye the first letter of one Name and then picture it joining the first letter of the second Name. The two letters then, as if, form another word. This procedure is called in Hebrew a “shiluv” (knitting). It is, as if, the letters of the names are being sewn together. This technique is demonstrated here:

'tv vv 't uvv'tv vv 'shsh w
vhvsh kkt

As said in the text, first we have the lower Hey of YHWH and that is followed by the Vav. Next we visualize the Yod of BEN next to the Yod of MAH, then the Hey of BEN next to the Hey of MAH, next the Vav of BEN next to the Vav of MAH and finally the final Hey of BEN next to the final Hey of MAH.

Next the letters of the Names *El Adonai* and knit together with the letters of the name *El YHWH*. First the Alef of El next to the Alef of the second El. Next, the same with the

letters Lamed. Next comes the Alef of Adonai, followed by the Yod of YHWH. Next comes the Dalet of Adonai followed by the Hey of YHWH. This procedure is repeated until both words are “knitted” together.

“Asiyah of Atzilut with the Yetzirah of Atzilut.” This has been explained above in detail. All prayer is in the general realm of Atzilut. We are now ascending through the specific realms within Atzilut.

Text: *Unite your Nefesh and Ruah with all the Nefashot and Ruhot of Asiyah and Yetzirah.*

Commentary: The Nefesh is the level of the human soul corresponding to the Asiatic realms. The Ruah is the level of the human soul corresponding to the Yetziratic realms. We are now in a process of ascent, therefore, the Nefesh soul is the first to ascend. That level of our soul is elevated to the next highest level through our recitation of the prayers.

Not only must we elevate our own soul; we are required to remember that all Adamic souls are united at the source. We must raise all souls collectively. Without this the act of rectification is incomplete.

Text: *Hold and unite the two front Tzitzit (upon your Talit Gadol). This unites the external aspect of Yetzirah with its internal aspect.*

Commentary: This is performed when reciting the Barukh Sh’Amar. Each of the four worlds has an inner aspect (*penimiyut*) and an external aspect (*hitzoniyut*). This symbolism of “aspects” refers to the inner sefirotic structures with each realm. The “*penimiyut*” of a realm refers to the upper three sefirot (Hokhma, Binah, Da’at: HaBaD) of that realm. The “*hitzoniyut*” of a realm refers to the lower three sefirot (Netzah, Hod, Yesod: NaHiY) of that realm. The Barukh Sh’Amar prayer begins our ascent into Yetzirah, therefore, it is most fitting that at this time the lowest level of Yetzirah is attached to the upper level. The

prayers of this section then elevate level by level.

Text: *Fulfill the positive commandment to bless HaShem, and to rectify the Throne of the Shekhina by the power of Abraham (the supernal Mercy which is called “Abraham”).*

Commentary: To “bless G-d” means that we are to give to Him life force energy. And how is it that we can give Him that which only He possesses? The answer is that G-d has given to us a portion of His life force energy. This is our souls. G-d sends down to us life force energy through the sefirot and the realms. Our Divinely ordained job is to use that energy to sift out the fallen sparks and to elevate them along with the life force energy given to us. This is referred to in Kabbalistic terminology as “*Aliyat MaN*”, the ascent of the feminine waters. These “waters” are our life force energy, our desires and intentions. They ascend through the act of “blessing”. “*To Bless HaShem*” is accomplished through both word and deed. To remember this we write the words:

"v , t l rck

In Asiyah we “rectified” the “*Table of David*”. Here in Yetzirah we elevate the “*Throne*” of the Shekhina, for here She dwells in the cloak of Metatron. The “*Throne*” is attributed to Abraham, for his sefirotic attribute is Hesed: the highest of the six sefirot that make up the general realm of Yetzirah. The words “*Throne of Abraham*” are thus written:

ovrct txf

We are still to keep in mind that we are to be servants to G-d. Thus the term is repeated here:

"v scg

All the Yetziratic concepts are then viewed together:

't v v v 't u u 't v v v 's u s u h u
v h v s h t k k t t
'v scg 'ovrct txf "v , t l rck

The Beriatric Realm

Text: *From Yotzer until the Amidah meditate upon elevating and uniting Yetzirah, Asiyah which are Vav Hey of Havaya, MAH and BEN, El Havaya and El Adonai with Beriah which is the first Hey, SAG and El Shadai.*

Commentary: Similar to the procedure outlined above, we now elevate the realms of Asiyah and Yetzirah to the third realm, Beriah. This is accomplished by again knitting the letters of the names together as follows:

'h v t v v v 's u h s u h s u h v v
 h v t v v v 't u t u u u
 v h h b s v s a h t k k k t t t

We see here the letters Hey Vav Hey in ascending order. Following are the three Yods of BEN, MAH and SAG, then the three Heys, then the three Vavs, concluding with the final Heys, all in ascending order.

Then the letters of El Adonai, El YHWH and El Shadai and knitted together in ascending order. Beginning with the Alefs of each of the three, then the Lameds, then each Name, letter by letter; first the Alef of Adonai, then the Yod of YHWH, then the Shin of Shadai, until all letters are finished.

Text: *Unite your NaRaN (Nefesh, Ruah, Neshama) with all the NaRaNs of BeYA (Beriah Yetzirah, Asiyah).*

Commentary: As above, we now elevate the three levels of our soul that correlate to the three worlds. We include our individual soul with all the three levels of soul of all Israel.

Text: *In the prayer Ahavat Olam, meditate upon fulfilling the positive commandment to love HaShem.*

Commentary: This is the prayer recited immediately prior to the Shema Yisrael. It

speaks of G-d's love to Israel. Thus when we recite this prayer we are to remember and fulfill in our intentions the commandment, "You shall love HaShem, your G-d" (Deut. 6:5). It is written thus:

"v , t v c v t k

Thus throughout this section we visualize the following:

'h v t v v v 's u h s u h s u h v v
 h v t v v v 't u t u u u
 v h h b s v s a h t k k k t t t
 "v , t v c v t k

Text: *When reciting the Shema, meditate upon fulfilling the commandment of uniting HaShem's Name.*

Commentary: The unity of G-d's Name is clearly the meaning of the words, "Shema Yisrael, HaShem our G-d, HaShem is ONE." (Deut. 6:4). Yet, there is much more to this.

In the *Siddur Rashash* (vol. 1, 33A), the "Yihud" (unity meditation) is explained. When we recite the word "Shema" we visualize the final Hey of YHWH, which is Malkhut. We visualize Her ascent to be next to the Vav (the next letter in ascent in the Name YHWH). She elevates to the Vav (who is Zeir Anpin-Z.A.) as "Mayim Nokbin" (feminine waters) as explained above. Together, Z.A. (the Vav) and Nok (the Shekhina – the final Hey) ascent as "Mayim Nokbin" to Abba (Hokhma) and Imma (Binah), who are the Yod, Hey of YHWH. This looks as follows:

v h ' u ' v

This union is also portrayed as the knitting together of the Names YHWH and the Name AHYH (Ehyeh) as follows:

v " v h v t h

Text: *Also, when reciting the Shema accept upon oneself the Arba Mitot*

Beit Din (the four methods of execution according to Torah Law). Include yourself along with all those who have been martyred, sanctifying and unifying the Name of HaShem

Commentary: This is one of the most important meditations in prayer. Not only can it be performed at this time, but it can also be visualized at any time of the day.

This meditation is the true surrender to the Hand and Will of G-d.

This meditation is performed by knitting the letters of YHWH and Adonai together with the letters of the Name AHYH (Ehyeh). Yet, this knitting is performed in a special manner.

Each of these three Names has four letters. Each of the four letters of these Names corresponds to the four realms discussed above. The Torah has ordained four different methods of performing executions for capital crimes. Each of these four also corresponds to the four realms. When one "sins" in a way that blemishes a specific realm, then a specific capital penalty is incurred.

The four methods of capital punishment by Torah law are stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation.

1. **Stoning** is the punishment for those who blemish **Atzilut**.
2. **Burning** is the punishment for those who blemish **Beriah**.
3. **Decapitation** is the punishment for those who blemish **Yetzirah**.
4. **Strangulation** is the blemish for those who blemish **Asiyah**.

When we accept upon ourselves the four manners of deaths we offers our soul to unite all the sefirotic aspects represented by the Names Adonai (Malkhut), YHWH (Tiferet) and AHYH (Ehyeh-Keter). Thus via the knitting of the three Names we ascend up the middle column from bottom (Malkhut) to top (Keter). Yet, this too has four levels. What is being restored is the

general holy Name YHWH. Thus to assist our visualizations we also visualize all four spellings of the Name YHWH.

The visualization is thus portrayed like this:

1. To atone for sins punishable by **stoning**, visualize the **Yod** of YHWH joining with the **Alef** of Adonai by the power of the **Alef** of AHYH to rectify the Name **AB**.

h v u h v s u h t t h v k r e x

2. To atone for sins punishable by **burning**, visualize the first **Hey** of YHWH joining with the **Dalet** of Adonai by the power of the **Hey** of AHYH to rectify the Name **SAG**.

h v u h v s u h v s v v p h r a

3. To atone for sins punishable by **decapitation**, visualize the **Vav** of YHWH joining with the **Nun** of Adonai by the power of the **Yod** of AHYH to rectify the Name **MAH**.

t v u t u t v s u h h b u d r v

4. To atone for sins punishable by **strangulation**, visualize the final **Hey** of YHWH joining with the **Yod** of Adonai by the power of the **Hey** of AHYH to rectify the Name **BEN**.

v v u v v s u h v h v e b n

In the Siddur Rashash (vol. 1 35B), this order is placed directly under the word "Ehad" (One) as follows:

ימסור נפשו עק"ה
 סקיל' יאא יוד ה' יוד ה' יוד ה'
 שריפ' הרה יוד ה' ואלו ה'
 הרג וני יוד ה' ואלו ה'
 ומק ה'יה יוד ה' וני ה'

The Atzilutic Realm

Text: *From the beginning of the Amidah meditate upon rectifying the menorah of HaShem's Shekhina (meaning to turn the Partzufim to be Face to Face) by the hand of Yitzhak.*

Commentary: The Menorah is the source of light. Light is what we have discussed above. It is here in the Amidah where the fallen sparks of holiness are restored to their proper place. At this time the sefirotic Faces (Partzufim) align and life force energy (Shefa) has an open channel to now flow into the lower worlds. The Amidah is thus the offering of the Heavenly sacrifice.

Up until now, we have elevated the fallen sparks. Now we offer them on high. The offering is their restoration. As with all things in nature, physical or metaphysical, life is cyclical. As we elevate fallen sparks of holiness, we in turn receive new Shefa to assist us in our lives and the continuation of our work. This give and take relationship is as on going as the process of breathing. It must be maintained for life to continue. This is why Temple sacrifice has never ceased. Changed, yes, but ceased, no!

The patriarch Yitzhak is referred to here. Being that Yitzhak corresponds to the sefirat Gevurah (severity), his correspondence here appears to be surprising. Here we are at the highest heights and we find Gevurah. We expect to find Hesed (mercy) don't we?

This question alone shows how little people truly know about the spiritual worlds. I must digress here to better explain this matter.

When we talk about elevating the fallen sparks of holiness from amongst the klipot; we are talking about restoring the fallen Shekhina to Her place. The fallen sparks, the source of light and life in the universe, are aspects of the holy Shekhina, Nok, the Malkhut of Atzilut. Due to the breaking of the vessels and the fall of the entrapped sparks, the Shekhina was "cast into exile". Exile means not being in one's home. Indeed, the Shekhina, who is the soul in the fallen sparks, is not at "home" all the while that the sparks remain below.

Our purpose in prayer is to return the Shekhina, Nok of Z.A. to Her rightful place

in Malkhut of Atzilut. Thus our elevation of sparks is specifically geared towards this design. We accomplish this daily through our acts of prayer.

The Shekhina, Malkhut of Atzilut is the "Feminine" Face of G-d. This is the aspect of the Divine that receives passively from the "Masculine" Face (Z.A.) above. The Feminine Face corresponds to the Gevurot (forces of severity). Yitzhak corresponds to Gevurah. Therefore, Yitzhak, more than the other patriarchs, assist in elevating the Shekhina.

Text: *Meditate upon uniting the hitzoniyyut and the penimiyyut of BeYA of Atzilut which are the Hey Vav Hey of the general Havaya, SAG, MAH and BEN, El Adonai, El Havaya and El Shadai weaving them together with the Atzilut of Atzilut which is the Yod of Havaya, AB.*

Commentary: In the writings of the Ari'zal it is taught that all three of the lower worlds can be considered to be the specific three lower worlds of Atzilut. This refers to the secret of the overlapping of the worlds. Thus whatever happens in the subjective worlds within Atzilut also happens in the lower worlds corresponding to them. One is the source and the soul of the other. The general lower worlds are referred to as the hitzoniyyut (external aspect) and the Atzilutic source is referred to as the penimiyyut (internal aspect).

The knitting spoken of continues in the same fashion as it was at the Beriatic and Yetziratic realms. We unite the letter Yod with the Hey, Vav, and Hey, from below to above:

hvw

Then we knit together the four miluies AB, SAG, MAH and BEN from below to above:

h v t v v v /shshshshsh

h v t v v v /shut ut uu

We then knit together the Names El Adonai,
El YHWH and El Shadai:

vhhb~~svs~~ aht kkk ttt

All three are thus viewed together:

hvw
hv hv tv vv ſhsuhsuhsu
hv hv tv vv ſhut ut uu
vhhb~~svs~~ aht kkk ttt

This then concludes the general kavana for
Atzilut.

Do not fool yourself for even a moment by
thinking that all that I have written here is
difficult or deep. This is only the mere
surface of the kavanot meditations. The
full order takes up an entire volume of the
Siddur HaRashash.

Text: *Unite your NaRNaH (Nefesh,
Ruah, Neshama, and Haya) with the
NaRNaHs of ABeYA.*

Commentary: The level of soul at the
Atzilutic level is called the Haya. We focus
our minds upon uniting our individual soul
with the collective soul of all Israel. The
Haya level of soul, corresponding to the
sefirat Hokhma, resides in the unconscious
side of the mind. Thus when we unite our
Hayas with those of the collective we are
connecting ourselves at the unconscious
level with the greater underlying,
unconscious super soul of collective Israel,
the living and the dead.

Text: *From Ashrei to Tefilah L'David
meditate upon Atzilut which is Yod
AB sending down Shefa to Beriah
which is Hey SAG, El Shadai:*

Commentary:

Yod AB:

hv ſhv svh h

Hey SAG, El Shadai:

hsa kt ſv ſhv svh ſv

The fallen sparks of holiness are sifted out
of the lower worlds and lifted up by our
prayers. Along with the fallen sparks, the
Shekhina is likewise elevated. Upon Her
ascent into Atzilut, She there bonds for so
short a time with Her "Husband" who is
Z.A. (Zeir Anpin). This is the great union of
Tiferet and Malkhut. The specifics of this
union are rather technical and best left to
be discussed at another time. Nonetheless,
during the Amidah Nok, the Shekhina
receives added shefa from Z.A. for the sake
of the upkeep of the world. We therefore
must channel the shefa below even as we
elevated the fallen sparks above.

In essence, we are participating in the
process of the Divine Breath. Through us
HaShem "inhales" the fallen sparks
returning them to their supernal source.
Once this is accomplished the act of
rectification (tikkun) can continue. G-d,
symbolically "exhales" sending below
further shefa to continue this great process.

Text: *From Tefilah L'David meditate
upon sending the Shefa down to
Yetzirah. From Kavveh meditate upon
sending down the Shefa to Asiyah.*

Commentary: Now that the Shekhina, Nok
of Z.A. (Malkhut) has received Her new
shefa the remainder of prayer channels the
shefa down through the worlds. All is
sealed, meaning the shefa is sealed in
Asiyah in the concluding prayer *Aleinu
L'Shabeah L'Adon HaKol.*

This concludes the *Kavanot Pratiyot*.
However, for those who have mastered this
material, I will now introduce you to the
next layer of kavanot in the ascent through
the worlds.

The Hekhalot Palaces

As we ascend through each of the four
worlds, it is important to understand the
subtle avenues of passages within each
world. As known from the ancient merkava
texts as well as from the holy Zohar, the
spiritual realms are divided into the "seven
palaces". Quoting an old legend regarding
them it said that the first of the palaces lies

in the west. It can be seen where it is not. Rather than explain old legends, let me simply review the order of the seven palaces. I have reprinted here the section about Hekhalot that I originally wrote for **Panu Derekh, issue #13**. This issue on basic Kabbalistic concepts and terminologies is important to review to understand the specifics of kavanot.

Panu Derekh, Issue #13 The Sheva Hekhalot - The Seven Palaces

Each of the worlds of A'Be'Y'A has within it ten sefirot. Yet, as A'Be'Y'A are worlds, the sefirot within these worlds are divided into "areas" or levels called Hekhalot, meaning palaces. When one makes an ascent into the supernal worlds, one rises through palace after palace and only then world after world. There are seven palaces within each world, and these seven manifest all ten sefirot within each specific world.

- The **first** of the palaces corresponds to **Malkhut** and **Yesod** and is called **Hekhal Livnat HaSapir** (a brick of sapphire).
- The **second** palace corresponds to **Hod** and is called **Hekhal Etzem HaShamayim** (the essence of heaven).
- The **third** palace corresponds to **Netzah** and is called **Hekhal Nogah** (brightness).
- The **fourth** palace corresponds to **Gevurah** and is called **Hekhal Zekhut** (merit).
- The **fifth** palace corresponds to **Hesed** and is called **Hekhal Ahava** (love).
- The **sixth** palace corresponds to **Tiferet** and is called **Hekhal Ratzon** (desire).
- The **seventh** palace corresponds to the upper triad of sefirot, **Keter, Hokhma and Binah** and is called **Hekhal Kodesh HaKodashim** (the holy of holies).

The names of the palaces are taken from different scripture verses where mention is made of heavenly visions. These visions of the Biblical prophets revealed these palaces and the Kabbalists simply call them what the Bible calls them.

In the Etz Haim (46:3,4), Rabbi Haim [Vital] reveals a most crucial point. Although we say that the first palace Livnat HaSapir, embodies both the sefirot Yesod and Malkhut, it really only embodies Yesod.

The Malkhut of each world descends into the world that is beneath it and becomes concealed within the Hekhal Kodesh HaKodashim of that world. This is not the normal state of affairs but occurred as a result of the "lessening of the moon".

This state of affairs is to be rectified by us, here on earth, as we ascend through the supernal palaces and assist in elevating the Malkhut to Her rightful place.

This function is what is performed in the secret meditations [kavanot] within the daily prayer services.

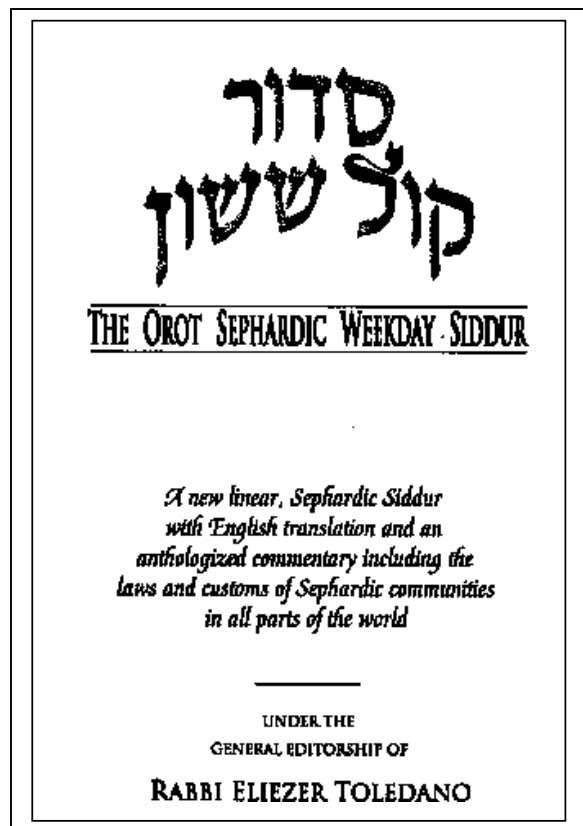
I will now proceed to outline the ascent through the seven palaces in each of the worlds Asiyah, Yetzirah and Beriah. For those readers who are not familiar with the traditional Shacharit morning service, it will serve you best to follow these directions alongside a Siddur (prayerbook).

A Word about the Siddur

In order to assist the reader I will make references of an excellent Hebrew-English Siddur entitled "**Kol Sasson**" published by Orot. This is a weekday linear Sephardic siddur, arranged by Rabbi Eliezer Toledano. This fine work is an excellent tool, not only learn the prayers in general, but also to learn them in Hebrew.

A linear siddur breaks up the text line by line, phrase by phrase Hebrew next to English so that you will be able to see just what Hebrew words translate into specific English sentences. Rabbi Toledano

includes within his work a basic commentary to the prayers along with minor sections on Halakha. He many times mentions Kabbalistic customs.



Another excellent point about this siddur is that the Name of HaShem is written in Kabbalistic fashion, with the Name ADNY written in small letters underneath an expanded final letter Hey of YHWH. The siddur does not demarcate the Kabbalistic ascent through the worlds. For this I will reference the original *Siddur HaRashash*.

I will only be making brief mention of specific prayers so as to guide the reader through the Shaharit morning service. In no way am I intending to list all the prayers or their meanings. There are a number of fine works in English by qualified Orthodox authors written on the topic of prayer. A visit or phone call to your favorite Orthodox Jewish bookstore will be of help in finding the right one for you.

The Seven Places of Ascent in Prayer

The First World: Asiyah

Although there are many preparatory prayers and meditations to recite, the ascent through the seven Hekhalot palaces of Asiyah is not reached until the recital of the Mishnaic chapter of the offerings of the sacrifice (Zevahim 5). This chapter popularly known by its Hebrew title "*Ezehu Mekoman*" can be found in the **Kol Sasson** siddur on page 69.

The first Mishna of this chapter ascends us to the **Hekhal Livnat HaSapir** (Yesod & Malkhut) of Z.A. of Asiyah. Remember we mankind are in the image of our Creator, so we correlate to that image who is Z.A. At this level of prayer we are still elevating through the Asiyatic worlds. Therefore, we speak of the Z.A. of Asiyah. As we move into the world of Yetzirah, when we discuss the Psalm readings, we will discuss Z.A. of Atzilut and so on with all the worlds. For right now, however, lets stay focused on Asiyah.

The second Mishna of this chapter begins with the words "The burned bullocks" (*Parim HaNisrafim*) and can be found on the bottom of page 70. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal Etzem HaShamayim** (Hod) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

The third Mishna of this chapter begins with the words "The communal and individual sin offerings" (*Hatot HaTzibur*) and can be found on the bottom of page 71. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal Nogah** (Netzah) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

The fourth Mishna of this chapter begins with the words "The burnt offering" (*HaOlah*) and can be found on the bottom of page 72. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal HaRatzon** (Tiferet) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

The fifth Mishna of the chapter begins with the words "The communal peace offering" (*Zivhei Shalmei Tzibur*) and can be found on page 73. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal Zekhut** (Gevurah) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

The sixth Mishna of the chapter begins with the words "The thanksgiving offering" (*HaTodah*) and can be found on page 74. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal Ahava** (Hesed) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

The seventh Mishna of the chapter begins with the words "Peace offerings are of minor holiness" (*Sh'tamim Kodashim Kalim*) and can be found on page 75. This Mishna corresponds to **Hekhal Kodesh HaKodashim** (Keter, Hokhma, Binah, Da'at) of Z.A. of Asiyah.

Following the conclusion of this chapter and another small but extremely important prayers the **Kaddish** prayer is recited (page 81). In brief the *Kaddish* prayer is the ladder of ascent through which we ascend from one world into another. This is why the *Kaddish* prayer is dispersed repeatedly throughout the service.

The recitation of I Chronicles 16:8-36 (**Hodu**) comes next (page 84) followed by other prayers until we come to a special prayer, **Barukh Sh'Amar** (page 97) which according to tradition was given to mankind from the angelic liturgy. We are now "officially" in the realm of Yetzirah.

The Seven Places of Ascent in Prayer The Second World: Yetzirah

After *Barukh Sh'Amar* and **Ashrei** (Psalm 145, page 102) we come to the reading of Psalms 146 – 150.

Psalm 146 (page 106) begins our ascent into the **Hekhal of Malkhut** of Yetzirah.

Psalm 147 (page 107) verses 1-9 take us into the **Hekhal of Yesod** of Yetzirah.

Psalm 147:9-20 takes us up into the **Hekhalot** of both the **Netzah and Hod** of Yetzirah.

Psalm 148:1-13 takes us up into the **Hekhal of Tiferet** of Yetzirah.

The final verse, 14, takes us up into the **Hekhal of Gevurah** of Atzilut.

Psalm 149 takes us up into the **Hekhal of Hesed** of Yetzirah.

Psalm 150, the last of the Psalms takes us up into the **Hekhal of HaBaD** of Yetzirah.

After the Psalms other songs of praise are recited followed by another Kaddish. We then begin to recite the blessings prior to the Shema Yisrael and ascend into the realm of Beriah.

The Seven Places of Ascent in Prayer The Third World: Beriah

This section begins a series of blessings that deal with contemplative ideas such as the unity of G-d. Included in this section is the famous prayer, most central to all Judaism: the **Shema Yisrael**. More details and insights about this section can be found in the Kol Sasson siddur (pages 126 – 147).

This section opens with the blessing "who forms lights" (*Yotzer Ohr*) (page 127). Upon reciting the words "who makes peace and creates everything" (*Borei Et HaKol*) we enter the Yesod, **Hekhal Livnat HaSapir** of Z.A. of Beriah.

Continuing this prayer (on page 128) with the words "G-d, who is blessed, great in knowledge" (*El Barukh Gadol*) we enter **Hekhal Etzem HaShamayim** (Hod) of Z.A. of Beriah.

After reciting the angelic liturgy called the **Kedusha** we begin the immediate blessings prior to the Shema. The first is called "To the blessed G-d" (*L'El Barukh*) on page 131. Upon reciting this we enter into **Hekhal Nogah** (Netzah) of Z.A. of Beriah.

Continuing this prayer we come to the line "Who in His goodness, renews" (*HaMihadesh B'Tuvo*). Reciting this we enter the **Hekhal Zekhut** (Gevurah) of Z.A. of Beriah.

Beginning with the next blessing (on top of page 132) "With an eternal love have You loved us" (*Ahavat Olam*) we enter into **Hekhal Ahava** (Hesed) of Z.A. of Beriah.

We then recite the Shema Yisrael prayer on page 135. In the *Siddur HaRashash* the kavanot meditations on the Shema prayer take up 34 pages, 20 of them alone on just the six words “**Shema Yisrael, HaShem Elokeynu HaShem Ehad**”. (Hear O’Israel the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One.”

Upon concluding the Shema, on page 142 we recite three words: “HaShem your G-d. It is true” (*HaShem Elokeykhem-Emet*). Upon reciting the word *Emet* (It is true) we enter into **Hekhal HaRatzon** (Tiferet) of Z.A. of Beriah.

Upon reciting the immediate prayer prior to the **Amidah** (on page 144) “The help of our forefathers” (*Ezrat Avoteynu*) we enter into **Hekhal Kodesh HaKodashim** (Keter, Hokhma & Binah) of Z.A. of Beriah.

At this point, we prepare to enter the realm of Atzilut, the *Amidah* prayer, also called the **Shemona Esrei**. The *Amidah* prayer of Atzilut corresponds to the letter **Alef**. As the letter **Alef** is silent so the *Amidah* is prayed in silence. The words of this prayer are the most important in the entire prayer

service. Our focus upon the correct meaning of the words here is crucial.

With this understanding, we conclude the ascent into the supernal worlds. The way down, as referenced above, is not as detailed as the way up. Nonetheless, it is just as important.

Conclusions

Throughout the Torah we are commanded repeatedly to remember our exodus from Egypt. The point of remembering is to help us keep focused on the bigger picture: that there is a L-rd and Ruler over us, who is very much involved with every minute detail of everything.

The Jewish people were created by G-d and chosen by Him to fulfill a great and holy task. Our job is to maintain the vertical flow of sefirotic shefa from the spiritual into the physical realms. Prayer is the device of this function. We have a lot of work to do and a long way to go. However, the rewards: they’re marvelous, and to be seen, when the time comes, with Mashiah.

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