

“אחת למעלה ושבע למטה”

THE TASK OF A JEW THEIR ENTIRE LIFE IS TO CONNECT
THE “ONCE UPWARDS” AND THE “SEVEN TIMES DOWNWARDS”

In preparation for Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, it is proper to examine a most fascinating aspect of the service of the Kohen Gadol in the Kodesh HaKodashim - Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. Namely, when sprinkling the blood of the atonement offerings, the bull of the Kohen Gadol and the he-goat of the Jewish people, the Kohen would sprinkle in a most unique way, not duplicated at any other point in the year: one sprinkle upwards followed by seven sprinkles downwards.

Additionally, when he would count aloud the sprinklings he would precede every number with the number one, as it is taught in the Mishnah in Yoma 53b:

“נטל את הדם ממזי שהיה ממורס בו, נכנס למקום שנכנס [לבית קדשי הקדשים. רש"י] ועמד במקום שעמד [בין הבדים], והזה ממנו אחת למעלה ושבע למטה... וכך היה מונה אחת, אחת ואחת, אחת ושתיים, אחת ושלוש, אחת וארבע, אחת וחמש, אחת ושש, אחת ושבע.”

“He took the blood from the one who was mixing it, he entered the place [the Kodesh HaKodashim; Rashi] and stand in the place where he had stood [between the poles of the Ark] and he would sprinkle once upwards and seven times downwards. And so he would count: one, one and one, one and two, one and three, one and four, one and five, one and six, one and seven.”

With a spirit of self-improvement, let us try to understand the following questions: A) What is the significance of one sprinkle upwards and seven downwards? B) Why did the Kohen Gadol precede the count for each downward sprinkle with the number one? C) Once we are dealing with the number seven, let us also analyze our practice (recorded in the Shulchan Aruch and Rema: (OC-623:6) of concluding the Neilah service with the verses declaring the Oneness of Hashem: “Shema Yisrael”, “Baruch Shem”, and then seven times: Hashem Hu HaElokim.

THREE EXPLANATIONS ON:

“ONCE UPWARDS AND SEVEN TIMES DOWNWARDS”

We will begin our journey with three beautiful explanations of why the Kohen Gadol sprinkled “once upwards and seven times downwards”, starting with the Light of the World, the Maharal of Prague, in his Derashos Maharal (Drush L'Shabbos Tshuva). The Maharal invokes a great principle that appears many times in his holy works, namely, that the number seven represents the natural world, which of course was created in seven days. The number eight, however, represents that which is above seven, the supernatural.

Based on this, he explains in his holy words, that on Yom Kippur, a day where we abstain from all worldly, natural pursuits, through fasting and the other bodily afflictions, when the Kohen Gadol would enter the Kodesh HaKodashim - Holy of Holies, that most supernatural place, he would sprinkle once upwards and seven times downwards, totaling eight sprinklings, representing the supernatural.

A second explanation is provided by the Great Light and Halachic Decisor, the Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles zy”a, in his Sefer Toras HaOlah (2:26). The Rema explains that the “once upwards” represents the good inclination of a person, that pushes him upwards towards the “One Above.” The “seven downwards” represents the evil inclination that has seven names, corresponding to the seven forces that drag a person down into sin. That is why the Kohen Gadol combined the “once upwards” with the “seven downwards”, to elevate the seven forces of the evil inclination to be joined with the good inclination. In his holy words:

”כבר נודע הזאות יום כפורים שהיא אחת למעלה ושבע למטה... והטעם שהיו רומזים על ענין יצר הרע המחטיא האדם והוא נקרא בשבעה שמות, ולכן היה זורק שבע הזאות למטה ואחת מלמעלה שהוא נגד יצר טוב, והיה מונה עם כל הזאות שלמטה [את ההזאה] שלמעלה, כמו שאמרו (יזמא נג): וכך היה מונה [אחת, אחת ואחת, אחת ושתיים, אחת ושלוש] כו', להורות כי מן הראוי לשתף יצר הרע עם יצר הטוב, ואז שניהם כאחד טובים, והיה זורק כמו שנאמר (יחזקאל לו-כה) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים.”

We also reached a third approach to the sprinklings of the Kohen Gadol, based on a novel idea revealed by the Sefas Emes (Sukkos, 1884) built on the words of the Holy Zohar (Emor, 103a). The Sefas Emes explains that the root of all the spiritual revelations, which are the seven clouds of glory, revealed on Sukkos, is the service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur at the time that he enters the Kodosh HaKodashim to offer the incense.

We can now follow on the coattails of the Sefas Emes to explain the sprinklings of the Kohen Gadol. The “once upwards” represents Yom Kippur, the day on which all Jews are uplifted above all worldly matters, as the Tur writes (OC- 619) that the reason we say Baruch Shem aloud on Yom Kippur is because we are like the angels who recite it aloud. Whereas the “seven times downwards” represents the seven days of Sukkos, where we find ourselves very much in this world, eating and sleeping in the Sukkah. It is through the sprinkling “once upwards and seven times downwards” that the Kohen Gadol draws from the holiness of Yom Kippur (“once upwards”) and injects it into Sukkos (“seven times downwards”).

THE SEVEN NAMES OF THE EVIL INCLINATION CORRESPONDING TO THE SEVEN EVIL CHARACTER TRAITS

Let us now merge these three explanations, enabling us to develop a message that we will be able to use in our service of Hashem for our entire lifetime. By way of introduction, let us look at the Gemara (Sukkah 52b) that the Rema mentioned above:

”שבעה שמות יש לו ליצר הרע, הקב”ה קראו רע... משה קראו ערל... דוד קראו טמא... שלמה קראו שונא... ישעיה קראו מכשול... יחזקאל קראו אבן... יואל קראו צפוני”.

“The evil inclination has seven names: HKB”H called him “evil”, Moshe called him “uncircumcised”, Dovid called him “impure”, Shlomo called him “the enemy”, Yeshaya called him “a stumbling block”, Yechezkel called him “a stone”, Yoel called him “the hidden one.”

The Rema explains that the seven names of the evil inclination correspond to the seven physical forces of this world, corresponding to the seven days of creation. The evil inclination makes use of these forces to drag a person downwards. However, the person is charged with overpowering the evil inclination using his good inclination, and it is to this that the passuk in Mishlei (24:16) refers: “For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again.”

A wise person understands that the Rema is referring to the seven character traits with which HKB”H created the world: chesed, gevurah, tiferes, netzach, hod, yesod, and malchus. In turn, these seven traits correspond to the seven days of creation, the seven days of the week, the seven years in the Shemithah cycle, the seven Shemithahs in the Yovel cycle, and the seven thousand years that the world exists.

Now, HKB”H created the human being with these same seven traits to use in their service of Hashem:

חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצה, הוד, יסוד, מלכות.

1. Chesed- to do kindness with all creations and to serve Hashem with love.
2. Gevurah- to overpower the evil inclination and serve Hashem with fear.
3. Tiferes- to glorify oneself with Torah and service of Hashem only.
4. Netzach- to come out victorious over one’s evil inclination.
5. Hod- to thank Hashem for all the good He has bestowed.
6. Yesod- to bind oneself to Hashem with an unbreakable knot.
7. Malchus- to declare Hashem King over all 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

However, the evil inclination with its seven names, has the seven forces of impurity which fight against the aforementioned seven character traits and try to derail a person’s service of Hashem by causing him to, Heaven forbid, use these very traits for sin, or at the very least for personal pleasure.

A PERSON WHO IS CONNECTED ABOVE WILL NOT FALL DOWN BELOW

We are now on the path to understanding the blood sprinkling service of the Kohen Gadol in the Kodesh HaKodashim, “once upwards and seven times downwards.” The Holy Zohar (Vayera, 112b) teaches that Avraham Avinu, before going down to Egypt, that most immoral land, tied himself through the rope of emunah to Hashem Above, so that he would not fall into the impurity of Egypt below, but could instead exit in peace, without sin. He writes:

“Due to this, Avraham clinged to emunah when he descended to Egypt and when he went to the Land of the Plishtim. (It is a parable) to a man who wanted to descend into a deep pit, and he was afraid that he would not be able to get out. What did he do? He tied one knot above the pit and said “once I have tied this knot I can now descend.” So too Avraham, at the time that he decided to descend to Egypt, before doing so he tied a knot of emunah first to fasten himself, and only after did he descend. And so was the case when he entered the Land of the Plishtim.”

This is the wondrous advice offered to every Jew by the Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Parshas Naso), based on the passuk (Devarim-32:9): “כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב הבל נחלתו” - “For Hashem’s share is His people; Yaakov, the portion of His possession.” He explains that every Jew must connect himself to Hashem Above. Being that the soul is a portion of Hashem Himself, a person, while indeed flesh and blood and standing on this earth, can have the mindset that he is connected with a rope (הבל) to Hashem Above. This is the source for the saying of the righteous: “a person who is connected above will not fall down below.”

This is buttressed beautifully by that which the Shem Mishmuel (Parshas Vayera) records that he heard from the Rebbe of Alexander zt”l: the word טבע, nature, comes from the same shoresh as טובע, drowning, because being in this world is like drowning in a river, and if not for the rope that The Captain (Hashem) throws, we would not be able to survive. This is what David HaMelech writes (Tehillim- 16:8): “I have set Hashem before me always; surely He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Rashi explains: “In all my actions I have placed His fear before my eyes. Why? Because He is always to my right, to help me from being moved.”

TO CONNECT TO THE “ONCE UPWARDS” SO AS NOT TO FALL “SEVEN TIMES DOWNWARDS”

Now our eyes are enlightened and our hearts rejoice as we merge the three explanations regarding the sprinkling of the Kohen Gadol in the Kodesh HaKodashim: “once upwards and seven times downwards.” We have already seen that the main task of a Jew in life is to connect himself through a deep bond to Hashem, the One and Only, in the spirit of “once upwards”, thereby meriting to stabilize himself in the “seven times downwards”, and enabling himself to use the seven character traits in the service of Hashem. And even if, Heaven forbid, the evil inclination should momentarily succeed, using the seven names and forces that it has in these traits, to defeat him, he can immediately grab onto that rope to pull himself up and retie himself to Hashem.

For this reason, on Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness and atonement for the entire Jewish nation, the Kohen Gadol sprinkled the blood in the Kodesh HaKodashim “once upwards and seven times downwards.” The sprinkling served to atone for the root of all sins, the lack of being tied to the “One Above”, allowing the descent into the trap of the evil inclination, “the seven times downwards.” Additionally, by performing the service in the holiest place in existence, the Kohen Gadol drew this holiness out and connected the Jewish people to it, allowing them to be connected to it for the entire year, thereby giving them the ability to uplift the “seven times downwards” by combining it with the “once upwards.”

Now we understand the Maharal’s explanation of the sprinklings: the eight total sprinklings represent the fact that the holiness of Yom Kippur, and specifically the entrance of the Kohen Gadol into the Kodesh HaKodashim, is supernatural, above the natural world of the seven days of creation. This is because the Kohen Gadol’s intention during this service was to connect the Jewish people to the supernatural worlds through the rope connecting us to the One Above, thereby protecting us from falling into the seven forces of the natural world. And this fits stunningly with the words of the Rema in Toras HaOlah, that the “once upwards” represents the good inclination, which rules over the “seven times downwards” representing the evil inclination and its seven forces used to drag a person downwards.

At this point we can merge the third explanation as well: with the sprinkling of the blood, the Kohen Gadol intended

to draw from the holiness of Yom Kipper, “once upwards”, and bring it into the seven days of Sukkos, “seven times downwards.” We can understand this based on the famous words of the Holy Zohar (Parshas Amor, 103b) and the writings of the Arizal (Shaar HaKavanos: Sukkos, Drush 3), that on the seven days of Sukkos the “seven shepherds” are revealed, each one of them corresponding to one of the seven character traits: Avraham=Chesed, Yitzchak=Gevurah, Yaakov=Tiferes, Moshe=Netzach, Aharon=Hod, Yosef=Yesod, Dovid=Malchus.

We now see that Yom Kippur itself, the day that we separate from all worldly pursuits and are elevated to the level of angels, serves as the “once upwards”, the rope with which we connect ourselves to the “One Above” so that we do not fall down below. Through this we are now able to serve Hashem on the seven days of Sukkos, using all of the seven traits of the “seven times downwards.”

Now it is easy to understand why the Kohen Gadol precedes each count with a “one”: one, one and one, one and two, one and three, one and four, one and five, one and six, one and seven. He does this to show that we must be connected to Hashem Above through each one of the seven character traits of the world below. If not, we are danger of allowing this trait to fall into the jurisdiction of the evil inclination who has a share in each trait through its seven names.

With this we can add a drop of sweetness in explaining what it says in the Gemara (Megilla 18a): “From where do we know that HKB”H called Yaakov, “Kel”? From what it says (Bereishis-33:20): “And he called it, “Kel Elokei Yisrael.” What does this mean that HKB”H called Yaakov, “Kel”? Based on what we have learned we can explain that Yaakov Avinu was a person who was tied to Hashem with every strand of his soul, to the point that Hashem called “Kel.” The “א” and “ל” of “א-ל” stands for אחת למעלה, “once upwards”, to say that Yaakov’s strength in holiness was his connection to Hashem Above, so as not to fall below.

TEFILLIN OF THE HEAD AND THE ARM: “ONCE UPWARDS” AND “SEVEN TIMES DOWNWARDS”

Now come and see how this joining of the “once upwards” with the “seven downwards” is hidden in the tefillin that we put on every day. By way of introduction let us bring the holy words of Maran HaChasam Sofer (Likutim Sof Devarim, pg. 162), where he writes a wondrous intention that one should have when donning tefillin:

“מה שמניחים תפלה של יד נגד הלב תחילה ומברכים להניח, ושוב של ראש ומברכים על מצות מפני שהוא גמר המצוה, יש לומר על דרך משל, בני מדינה שרצו להמליך עליהם מלך, אמר להם [המלך], בתחילה אסרו בזיקים את פלוני המערער על המלכות ואחר כך תמליכוני עליכם.

והכי נמי הרשעים ברשות לבם ההולכים בשרירות לבם הרע, והצדיקים לבם ברשות שכלם וברשות נשמתם, על כן טרם שיניח תפילין עטרה על המוח להקדישו קודש קדשים, צריך תחילה לאסור בזיקים את המערער על המלוכה היינו הלב, וצריך להניח תפילין נגד לבו שיהיה קשור ואסור בזיקי קדושה, ואז אחר כך גומר המצוה ומניח של ראש על המוח.”

“That which we place the arm tefillin, lined up with the heart, first, make the bracha of “l’haniach”, and then subsequently don the head tefillin and make the bracha of “al mitzvas” as we complete the mitzvah, can be explained with a parable: There was a country that wanted to appoint a King over themselves. The King told them to first lock up those who were arguing against having a King and only then to accept his Kingship upon them.

Wicked people are subject to their heart’s desires. On the other hand, the heart of the righteous person is given over to his intellect and to his soul. Therefore, before we put on the Tefillin shel Rosh, as a crown upon the brain, thereby sanctifying it to the holiest levels, we must first tie up that which might question the Kingship, the heart. By fastening the Tefillin shel Yad across from the heart we are tying up the heart in the bounds of holiness. Only then do we finish the mitzvah by putting the Tefillin shel Rosh over the brain.”

We can add a spice to his holy words based on the comment of the Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah- 22:9) on the passuk (Koheles-10:2): “A wise man’s heart is to his right’, this is the yetzer tov that is placed on the right, ‘and the heart of a fool is to his left’, this is the yetzer hara that is placed on the left.” In other words, the yetzer tov is located in the right chamber of the heart, whereas the yetzer hara is located in the left chamber. This is what Chazal say (Brachos 54a): “And you shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart’, with both your inclinations, the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara.” Thus we see that the two inclinations are both found in the chambers of the heart.

Based on this we can suggest that this is the reason HKB”H commanded us to place the tefillin shel yad on the left arm, next to the left chamber of the heart. This is in order to subjugate the yetzer hara found in the left chamber of the heart. And we wrap the straps around the arm seven times to tie up the seven evil

forces that belong to the yetzer hara. After that, we are ready to place the tefillin shel rosh above the brain, in order to connect ourselves to HKB”H.

Thus we find that the tefillin shel rosh corresponds to the “once above”, whereas the tefillin shel yad, with its seven wrappings around the arm corresponds to the “seven times below.” The purpose of this is to sanctify a person for the entire day, to connect him with the “One Above”, which in turn will serve as a protection from falling “seven times below.” And even if, Heaven forbid, the yetzer hara succeeds in causing him to fall, he will merit what it says in the passuk: “For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again.”

SHABBOS KODESH: “ONCE UPWARDS” AND “SEVEN TIMES DOWNWARDS”

This beautiful idea opens the door slightly towards an understanding of the awesome holiness of the Shabbos. It states in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim- 36:1): “It is prohibited to wear tefillin on Shabbos and Yom Tov as these days are “a sign” themselves and were one to don another “sign” it would be a degradation to their standing as “a sign.” We can understand this as follows: the seven days of the creation correspond to the seven character traits, “the seven times downwards”, which a person can fall into through the yetzer hara and its seven forces of impurity.

In order to successfully channel these traits for service of Hashem, one must be connected the “One Above” so as not to fall into the “seven below.” Therefore, Hashem, with His great compassion and kindness, gave us a wondrous gift, the Seventh Day, the Day of Shabbos, a holy day with a prohibition of work, to enable us to separate from all worldly pursuits in order to connect with Hashem through Torah and Tefillah. Through this, we are able to acquire protection for all seven days of the week,

including Shabbos itself on which we are required to enjoy certain delightful worldly pleasures.

Shabbos is the “once upwards”, connecting us to Hashem Above, ensuring protection for the “seven below”- the seven days of the week, including Shabbos. It is sweet to find this in the words of the Holy Zohar (Parshas Teruma, 135a): **רז"א** “**דשבת איהי שבת דאתאחדת ברזא דאחד**”. This means that it is through Shabbos that Kenesses Yisrael merits to bind itself with the Omnipotent One.

Now we can appreciate why it is prohibited to wear tefillin on Shabbos. Shabbos itself is the “sign” through which we bind the seven traits below with the One Above. Were one to don his tefillin shel yad and shel rosh, binding the seven traits of his heart to the One Above, he would thereby belittle the Shabbos and its own capacity to bind the seven traits with HKB”H!

How sweet and pleasant it is to connect it all together and complete this essay with an explanation of the practice of saying the pesukim declaring the Oneness of Hashem at the end of Neilah: “Shema Yisrael”, “Baruch Shem”, and then seven times: “Hashem Hu HaElokim”. The purpose of saying Shema Yisrael and Baruch Shem is to connect ourselves to HKB”H: Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. This is the “once upwards.” Immediately after this act, we say Hashem Hu HaElokim, seven times, corresponding to the seven traits, in order to dedicate their use only for the purpose of serving Hashem. It is through this that we join ourselves to the service of the Kohen Gadol on this Holy Day, when he would sprinkle the blood, with this intention, in the Holy of Holies: “once upwards and seven times downwards.”



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