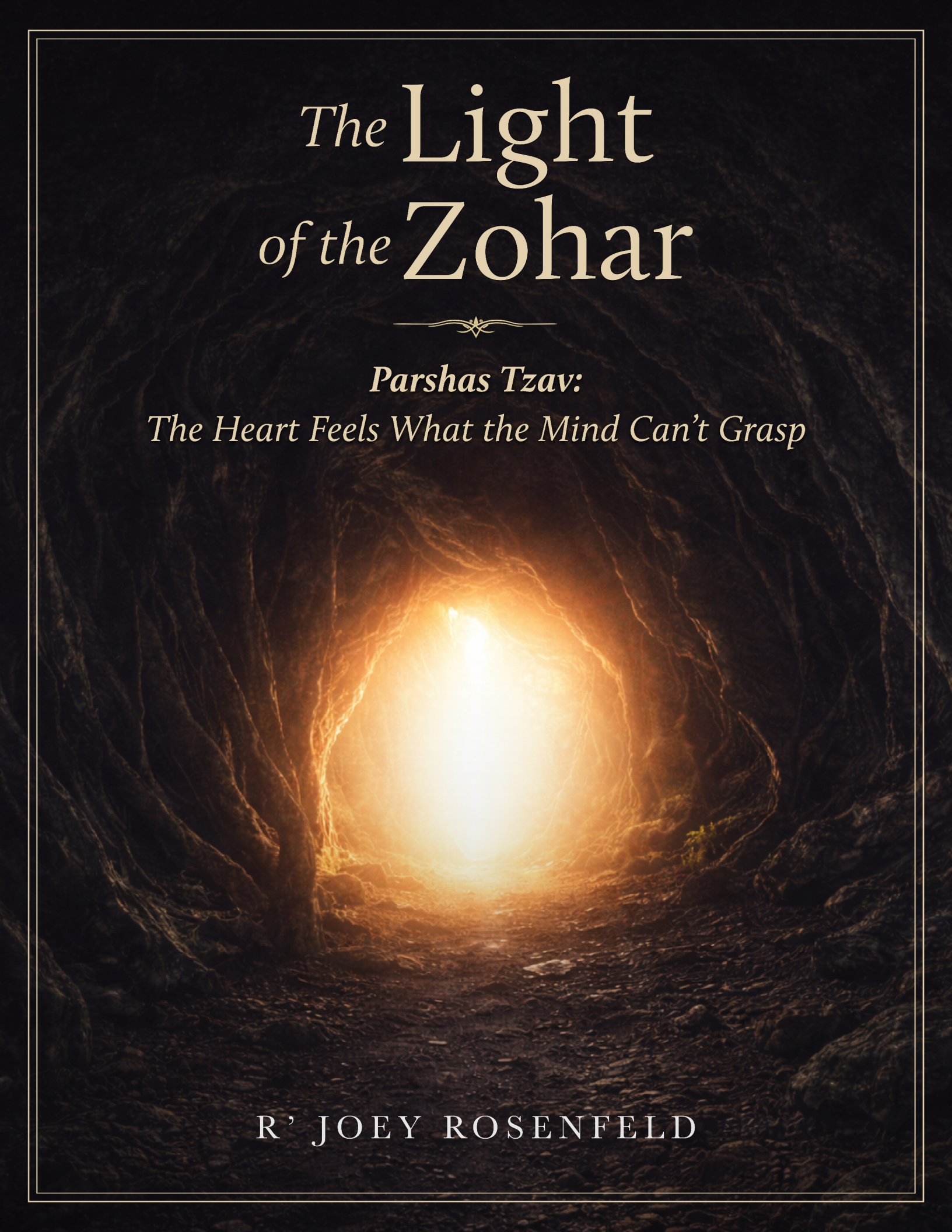


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a dark, cavernous tunnel. The walls of the tunnel are rugged and textured, with some small plants growing on the right side. At the far end of the tunnel, a bright, warm light emanates from an opening, creating a strong glow that illuminates the surrounding rock. The light has a golden-yellow hue, suggesting a fire or a distant sun. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and hopeful, symbolizing a journey from darkness to light.

The Light *of the* Zohar



Parshas Tzav:

The Heart Feels What the Mind Can't Grasp

R' JOEY ROSENFELD

— *The Light of the Zohar* —

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R' JOEY ROSENFELD

זאת תורת העולה וגו'. רבי שמעון פתח ואמר, (תהילים ל"ו:ז') צדקתך כהררי אל משפטיך תהום רבה וגו', (פקודי רל"ח ע"ב ושם מוגה) האי קרא אוקימנא ליה ואממר, תא חזי, האי עולה, סליקו וקשירו דכנסת ישראל לעילא, ודבוקא דילה בגו עלמא דאתי, למחוי פלא חד, בקשורא חדא, בחידו. ובגין דסלקא לעילא לעילא, כתיב זאת תורת, וזא דכר ונוקבא כחדא, תורה שבכתב, ותורה שבעל פה, לסלקא בכביבתא.

כד אתער סטרא דצפון, כמה דאוקימנא דכתיב, (שער השירים ב) שמאלו תחת לראשי, כדין איהי סלקא בכביבתא, ואתעטרא בימינא, ואתחברא באמצעיתא, ואתגהיר פלא מרזא דקדוש הקדשים, וזא מגו דרזא דאדם, ברעו דכהנא, ובצלוחתא, ובשירתא.

והא אוקימנא דעולה קדוש קדשים, ברזא דרוח עלאה, בגין דתלת רוחין קושירן כחדא, רוח תמאה דאקרי רוח הקדוש. רוח דלגו באמצעיתא, דאקרי רוח חכמה ובינה. וכן אקרי רוח תמאה. אבל האי רוח, דגפיק מגו שופר, כלילן באשא ומיא. רוח עלאה דאיהו סתים בחשאי, דביה קיימין כל רוחין קדישין, וכל אנפין גהירין. ובגין כך אהדרת עולה רוח ממש.

“This is the law of the burnt-offering, etc.”

Rabbi Shimon opened and said:

*“Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; Your judgments are a great deep, etc.”
(Psalms 36:7).*

This verse we have already established and explained. Come and see: this burnt-offering is the ascent and the bonding of the Community of Israel above, and her cleaving within the World-to-Come, so that all may become one, in a single bond, in unity.

And because she ascends ever higher, it is written: “This is the law...” — the secret of male and female as one, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, ascending in love.

When the side of the north is aroused, as we have established — as it is written, “His left hand is under my head” (Song of Songs 2) — then she ascends in love, is crowned by the right, is joined in the middle, and all is illumined from the secret of the Holy of Holies. This emerges from the mystery of the human being, through the will of the priest, through prayer, and through song.

And we have already established that the burnt-offering is the Holy of Holies, in the secret of the supernal spirit — because three spirits are bound as one:

the lower spirit, called the Holy Spirit;

the spirit within the middle, called the spirit of wisdom and understanding — and this too is called the lower spirit;

but this spirit that emerges from within the shofar is interwoven with fire and water.

The supernal spirit is hidden in secrecy; within it stand all the holy spirits, and all countenances are illumined.

Therefore the restoration of the burnt-offering is truly spirit itself.

The Small Aleph and the Fire of Ascent

Be'ezras Hashem, we are continuing our weekly series of shiurim on the Zohar HaKadosh, illuminating the Torah of Moshe with the Torah of Rashbi, and illuminating the Torah of Rashbi with the Torah of Moshe. The beginning of Vayikra is itself a continuation of Purim: the revelation of the small *aleph*, that subtle and hidden call, speaking into the innermost place of each and every yid. And so we begin with Parshas Tzav, specifically with the Zohar's discussion of the *korban olah*, the offering that is entirely consumed and rises completely upward to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

The Offering That Leaves Nothing Behind

The *korban olah* is distinct from the other korbanos. Other korbanos involve a form of human participation in their consumption, as the kohanim partake of them, but the *olah* is entirely for above. It is wholly given over, wholly burnt, wholly reduced to ash, until nothing remains except the irreducible residue of the physical being itself: *afar ve'efer*,

dust and ash. That remnant, the irreducible *roshem*, is the trace of embodied existence, the lowest point that remains tethered to the ground even after everything else has ascended. The fire consumes the form, the substance, the separateness, and what remains is only that final mark of what it once was, while everything else rises upward.

The Secret of Total Surrender

The *olah* is symbolic of a person who gives everything. It is the *korban* of utter *mesirus nefesh*, of full self-offering, holding nothing back. It is bound up with the innermost sanctity, with the secret of entry into the Kodesh HaKodashim of the soul, the singular point of direct attachment expressed by Rashbi: *be'chad katira itkatarna* - with one unshakeable bond, a singular connection, I have bound myself completely to You. The *korban olah* embodies that singularity of ascent, the movement in which every faculty and every fragment of the self is offered upward. But it is striking that when the Zohar opens its discussion of this offering, it does not begin with the

language of fire, or sacrifice, or even ascent, but with a pasuk discussing the inscrutable depths of divine justice.

Mountains of Righteousness, Depths of Judgment

Rebbe Shimon opens: “*Tzidkascha k’hararei Eil, mishpatecha tehom rabbah*”. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains of God; Your judgments are like a vast abyss. The Zohar says that this pasuk has already been explained, and yet Rebbe Shimon returns to it here because it is the gateway into the Torah of the *olah*. This is the language of *Tziduk HaDin*, of affirming the righteousness of HaKadosh Baruch Hu even where His judgment remains unfathomable. The work of the tzaddikim, rooted in the lashon of *tzedek*, is to be *matzdik hadin*, to affirm the divine rightness hidden within all things. As the earlier Tzaddikim explain, the task of the tzaddik is, in some sense, to judge HaKadosh Baruch Hu favorably - meaning not, *chalilah*, to stand over Him, but to uncover the *nekudos tovos* in all of existence until everything can be returned to its place within the all

encompassing light of divine righteousness.

The Abyss That Cannot Be Crossed Over With Knowledge

A person imagines that he knows, until he collides with the reality of “*mishpatecha tehom rabbah*”. Then he realizes that he does not know anything at all. Not only does he fail to grasp the answer, but he begins to understand that what he is trying to grasp is, in its essence, beyond the reach of the mind. There is a point in life where *Tziduk HaDin* means the surrender of the need for explanation itself. A person closes their eyes and says: I cannot reach the bottom of this abyss, and therefore I will stop trying to master it. In that surrender, a deeper form of *ratzon* and yearning begins to emerge.

The Desire Beyond Understanding

This is why we say these words of *Tziduk HaDin* at Minchah of Shabbos, at the time of *Ra’ava d’Ra’avin*, the innermost will of all wills. That desire is not detached from action; it is built upon action, speech, thought, and every effort

a person has made to transform what can be transformed. But once a person has done everything possible, there is a further *avodah*: to let go and let the *olah* rise, to let the final offering be consumed, to give over even the demand to understand. At that point, desire becomes detached from utility and from calculation. It becomes a pure and immovable decision of the soul, the ability to choose faith, the secret of “*Derech emunah bacharti*”, the unwavering stance of “*kacha ya’aseh l’ish asher hamelech chafetz bikaro*”- a choice not dependent on anything, and therefore not subject to being taken away.

The Torah of the Burnt Offering

This is the Torah of the *olah*. The *olah* is a consuming flame, a total burning, a giving over that leaves nothing but ash. It is not merely a historical image, though of course the language of destruction always trembles with historical resonance. Rather, it speaks to the secret of what remains after devastation: the point of life that survives chaos itself, the holy residue left after a thing has been fully offered

up. And therefore Rebbe Shimon begins here with “*tzidkascha tzedek...mishpatecha tehom rabbah*”. You are righteous, HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Everything is good, even where I cannot know how or why. Only from there can the Torah of the *olah* be understood.

Entering the Holy of Holies

If one wishes to understand the korban that ascends completely, that enters where nothing else can enter, that secret of *bikrovai ekadeish*, then one must begin with this posture of not-knowing. “*Zos toras ha’olah*” is not merely the law of a sacrifice; it is the Torah of ascendancy itself, the movement by which all things rise directly to their highest place. But that ascent must be preceded by the secret of *Tziduk HaDin*, by the work of Minchah on Shabbos, by recognizing: I know nothing, and yet everything is held within Your righteousness. You are the *Tzaddiko shel Olam*, the One Who gives strength to the *tzaddikim* who reveal that “*amech kulam tzaddikim*”, that righteousness saturates all existence. Only from there can a person begin to give himself over completely.

Gathering Adam and Behemah into One Offering

The Zohar continues by explaining that the purpose of the *korban olah* is to unite *adam u'behemah*. To exist is already to be a composite of these two dimensions: the human and the animal, the *ma"n* of rectification and the *be"n* of shattering, the ordered and the chaotic, the Godly soul and the animal soul. The secret of the *korban* is to gather each of these dimensions together and offer them together up to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Not only the refined part, not only the elevated part, but all of it - the broken part, the instinctive part, the struggling part, the knowing and the unknowing alike. The *olah* is not the denial of complexity; it is the sanctification of totality. Everything is brought upward together.

The Child's Question

The Zohar then opens a new and wondrous doorway. Rebbe Eliezar asks his father a question. After Rebbe Shimon has described this ascending *ratzon* that rises into the Kodesh HaKodashim and unites the desire of

kohen, levi, and yisrael, Rebbe Elazar asks: ***ad heichan ihu salka*** - how high up does it actually go? This is the question only a son can ask his father. The father speaks of ascent, of a *ratzon* that rises beyond all boundaries, and the son asks for its measure: where exactly are we going? What is the point toward which the mind reaches, and what is the point beyond which the mind must not presume to go?

Kohen, Levi, Yisrael: Expansion, Containment, and the Unity of Both at Once

Rebbe Eliezar's question is not only technical. He is asking about the illumination that binds together the threepart nature of the Jewish people, the *koheinn, levi, and yisrael*, which are not only three divisions within Klal Yisrael but also three dimensions within the self. The *kohen* represents the side of *chesed*, expansiveness, and expression. The *levi* represents the side of *din*, contraction, containment, and song through *gevurah*. *Yisrael* represents the inner point of balance, the middle line that emerges through the harmony of right and left. This is the secret by

which all of the lights are ultimately meant to descend into the vessel, until the vessel itself is revealed as light.

Going Up and Coming Down with the Son

Rebbe Shimon is always accompanied by Rebbe Eliezar, and the R' Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern points out a beautiful re-reading of the expression "*ayil u'bar*" — that Rebbe Shimon went in and came out. According to Rabbeinu Chananel, *bar* can be read as "his son," meaning that Rebbe Shimon went up with his son and came down with his son. The deepest ascents of the tzaddik are not meant to detach him from the world below, and certainly not from his family. On the contrary, the purpose of ascent is to draw the Torah back down into the home, into relationships, into the world of children, into the reality of embodied life. The highest lights are only complete when they become clothed below.

The North and the Hidden Point

This ascent is bound up with the mysterious orientation of *tzafon*, the

north. Rebbe Shimon describes the north as the place from which the intensity of desire emerges, the concealed region of the self, the *tzefunas hamoach*, the hidden chambers of consciousness. From the north can emerge harshness and *gevurah* - "*mitzafon tipatach hara*" - and yet the work is to sweeten those judgments at their root. The hidden becomes transformed into "*mah rav tuvcha asher tzafanta lire'echa*", the great goodness You have hidden for those who fear You. That which is most concealed becomes the source of the highest *ratzon*.

The Child Forces the Torah Downward

Rebbe Elazar asks as a son asks. There is humility in the question, and *bittul*, and reverence, but there is also insistence. Only the child can ask in a way that demands that the father reveal what he otherwise might have left concealed. In this sense, the generations of children force Torah downward into ever more accessible forms. A *talmid* becomes a *ben*, and the *ben* compels revelation precisely by asking: ***ad heichan ihu salka?*** How high does it

actually go? What exactly are you telling us about this ascent?

Up to Ohr Ein Sof

Rebbe Shimon answers him simply: ***ad Ein Sof***. It goes all the way up to the place of *Ohr Ein Sof*. Of course, this does not mean grasping *Atzmus*, *chas v'shalom*, for the principle of “*kedushasi lema'aloh mikedushaschem*” must always remain present. The essence of HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not being discussed in any graspable or thematic sense. Rather, *Ein Sof* here refers to the highest point along the ladder of wisdom that the mind can approach only by realizing that it cannot grasp it. It is the threshold at which the mind becomes fully aware of the impossibility of its own mastery.

The Place of Concealment

Rebbe Shimon says that all unity and all completion come to rest in that hidden place, ***behahu tzni'u***, in that concealment that cannot be grasped and cannot be known in any way other than modesty. This is the level of *Reisha d'lo Ityada*, the unknowable head, the *keter* of Atik, the

source-point beyond ordinary cognition. The mind reaches its own end there. It discovers that it cannot say with certainty what is within and what is without, what is above and what is below. And yet that very uncertainty becomes the site of attachment.

Knowing by Not Knowing

This is not a negation of knowledge in the simplistic sense. It is a deeper form of *daas*, the *daas* that knows the limits of *daas*. On Purim, we do not merely discuss this place; we live it as *ad d'lo yada*. But afterward, the work is to draw that *lo yada* into the vessels of knowing - to know that one cannot know, and to let that become a stable form of consciousness. This is what the Zohar means by saying that the loftiest place is a place where “*one does not connect and does not know*”. The connection happens precisely through the realization that complete grasp is impossible.

The Place Beyond Beginning and End

Rebbe Shimon continues: this level cannot be made into a beginning or an end. It cannot be converted into a

functional system. One cannot say: this is the first rung, and from here everything proceeds. Nor can one say: this is the final achieved point. It transcends those categories entirely. Chochmah and Binah emerge beneath it as beginning and end, point and expansion, but the inner essence of *Reisha d'lo Ityada* remains beyond the structure.

The Mind Stops, the Heart Continues

And yet the first teaching of the parshah still governs everything: the teaching of the *Korban olah* and of *ratzon*. What the mind cannot grasp, the heart can still desire. The olah rises to the Kodesh HaKodashim even if no conceptual grasp can reach there. As the Zohar teaches elsewhere, "*leis machshavah tafis beih klal*" - thought cannot grasp Him at all - "*aval itfas ihu b're'usa d'liba*" - but He is grasped through the desire of the heart. What does the heart grasp? It grasps the fact that there is something beyond its grasp, and it longs toward it with unceasing sincerity.

The Concealed Will of All Wills

The Zohar says that with respect to Ein Sof there is no actual language of desire, or light, or illumination that can properly be applied. All such descriptions fall away. Nevertheless, all lights and all illuminations depend upon that hidden point and receive their life from it. No one who knows, and no one who does not know, can claim possession there. Only one thing rises toward it: the concealed supernal will, the "*re'u ila'ah stima'ah d'chol setimin*", the secret desire hidden within all concealments. The place cannot be mastered, but it can be remembered.

The Scent That Remains

And how is it remembered? The Zohar says: like one who catches the scent of something and is perfumed by it. Not direct possession, not clear cognition, but fragrance. This is the *scent* of Gan Eden, the subtle trace that lingers after an encounter with a realm beyond articulation. A person comes out of Purim often feeling empty-handed, unable to say what was gained, unable to name what was touched. But something

remains. The soul carries away the scent.

Besamim and the Irreducible Trace

This is why the Shevet MiYehudah explains the mitzvah of intoxication of Purim through the language of “לִבְסוּמִי” in the language of perfume and fragrance. What persists after the state of *ad d’lo yada* is not knowledge, but *besamim* - the reviving air of the irreducible scent that restores the soul. The sense of smell, as the tzaddikim teach, was not damaged by the *cheit* of the Eitz HaDaas in the same way as the other senses. It retains a primal purity. The *rei’ach* is thus the inner trace of *ra’ava d’ra’avin*, the memory of the place beyond knowledge that nevertheless can still be breathed in.

Returning to the Smell of Home

That scent is the longing to return home. It is the smell of the korban, the smell of Gan Eden, the smell of the place before fracture. Moshe Rabbeinu understood that in order to take the Yidden out of Mitzrayim, a korban Pesach had to be brought even there, in

the depths of exile, because the korban reawakened the soul’s native fragrance. It restored the Yidden to the place of inner purity that had never been damaged. What the *ketores* reveals on Purim becomes manifest in the *rei’ach nicho’ach* of the *korban olah* in Tzav. The soul remembers where it belongs by way of scent.

The Descent of the Tzaddikim

The Zohar then reveals that the tzaddikim possess the capacity to descend into the most dangerous zones of consciousness. For a tzaddik, even the slightest deviation - the tefillin being one inch off, as it were - is already a form of the deepest *yeridah*. Their descent is not like ours; the distance is small, but the fall is immense. And yet they enter those places willingly in order to redeem them. This is the secret of “*ein tzav ela avodah zarah*”: the struggle over how to relate to what cannot be grasped without falling into distortion.

The Tzaddik’s Nose

The tzaddikim descend there so that we may inherit from them the power of *rei’ach*, the ability to smell our way

through confusion. Through the nose of the tzaddik, we begin to smell more deeply ourselves. We uncover the “af” in our own face, the place of anger, constriction, and breath, and begin to sweeten it. This is the secret of “*l’Ba’al ha’af ani mispallel*” - that tefillah rises through the mystery of breath and through the middos through which HaKadosh Baruch Hu reveals Himself to the world. We pray directly to Him, always “*eilav*”, but the path of that directness is through the forms of divine self-disclosure.

A Mediated Immediacy

This is not “*el hamiddos*”, chas v’shalom, but “*eilav v’lo l’middosav, b’derech middosav*”. One goes directly to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, but one does so by way of the only path available to created consciousness: the mediated world of names, middos, tzimtzum, Torah, and mitzvos. This is a mediated immediacy. The soul knows, in its innocence, that every cry goes directly to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* in His Essence, so to speak, and that innocence is true. But the mind must learn that such directness is only livable through the

vessels of consciousness He Himself has given us.

The Breath That Sweetens All Severity

Rebbe Nachman speaks of the two nostrils, of Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David, the breath through which Malchus is sweetened and unity is drawn into the world. The nose, the *af*, the breath, the ketores, the *rei’ach nicho’ach* - all of these converge here. When one understands that knowledge cannot pass beyond *pnimiyus d’Radla*, but ratzon can still rise up there, then one begins to understand that not reaching can itself be a form of reaching. A deep breath becomes an act of *hamtakas hadinim*. Breath turns anger into sweetness and concealment into longing.

Ayei HaSeh La’Olah

From there one can arrive at the secret of *ayei haseh la’olah* - where is the sheep for the offering? The answer is that the self itself becomes the offering. Through the koach of Aharon HaKohen and through the strength of all the true tzaddikim, a person can uncover the

light of HaKadosh Baruch Hu wherever he finds himself. All the *avodah zarah*, all the violence, all the stench of this world can be sweetened in the secret of the *korban olah*, the secret of the breath of Mashiach, in the aspect of the fragrance that remains after everything else has burned away. And what remains then is not understanding, but *ratzon*. Not possession, but attachment. Not explanation, but the irreducible scent of holiness.