

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



THE KETORET

What was Ketoret? The Ketoret was a compound of eleven (11) different spices, which weighed approximately 1,840 pounds [836.36 kg]. From this compound an incense offering (also called Ketoret) was brought in the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). This offering was brought twice daily, once as part of the morning service and once as part of the afternoon service. This happened seven days a week, every day of the year, including Shabbat and Yom Kippur. (Five pounds of Ketoret was burnt daily, half in the morning and half in the afternoon.)

Preparing the Ketoret was not easy. It had to be weighed out, rubbed, soaked and well ground. It required someone to supervise the grinding process with the constant reminder: "Grind well! Grind well!" On the other hand, it didn't have to be done all at once. As long as the spices were kept in proper proportion it was permitted to do enough for every day.

Nowadays to commemorate this service we read about the Ketoret in the Shacharit and Mincha prayers. Our reading however, does not deal with the actual process of offering the Ketoret, but rather with how it was made, i.e., its ingredients and preparation.

Is it so important to recite a recipe as part of a prayer service? What exactly was the idea of the Ketoret and what part did it play in the daily Temple service?

The Rambam, in his Guide for the Perplexed (3:45), suggests the following reason for this ritual:

Since many beasts were daily slaughtered in the holy place, the flesh cut in pieces and the entrails and the legs burnt and washed, the smell of the place would undoubtedly have been like the smell of the slaughterhouses, if nothing had been done to counteract it. They were therefore commanded to burn incense there twice every day... in order to give the place and the garments of those who officiated there a pleasant odor. There is a well-known saying of our Sages, "In Jericho they could smell the incense" [burnt in the Temple]. This provision likewise tended to support the dignity of the Temple. If there had not been a good smell, let alone if there had been a stench, it would have produced in the minds of the people the reverse of respect; for our heart generally feels elevated in the presence of good odor, and is attracted by it, but it abhors and avoids bad smell.

In other words, the pleasant aroma of the Ketoret is intended to offset the stench that would otherwise fill the Mikdash due to the animal sacrifices and thus discourage pilgrimages to the Temple.

The Maharam Shick, in his work on the 613 Mitzvot, claims that in light of the Rambam's understanding of this Mitzva one could explain the Gemara's comment (Yoma 26a) that the performance of this ritual is rewarded with wealth. ▶

10th ADAR I 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 4:57 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 6:08 PM

> MAZAL TOV

Simon and Irit Gubbay
on the birth of their baby boy



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

For our upcoming events
check our website
www.torahactionlife.com

- 1st MARCH
Shabbat UK Young Professionals Friday night dinner
- 3rd-7th MARCH
Young Professionals Ski Trip
- 21st MARCH
Family Purim Seuda



DVAR TORAH

The Ketoret
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

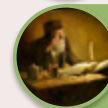
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DVAR TORAH

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HALACHOT

The Practice That a Mohel Serves as
Hazzan... / RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Q&A & CARTOON

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Offering the incense in the Mikdash serves to endear the Temple and its rituals to the masses, and thus draws other Jews closer to the love and service of the Almighty. People involved in this ever so important work are indeed deserving of immense reward.

The Arizal teaches that reciting the Ketoret with care and devotion is very helpful for coming back to live a proper Jewish life, even for one who was in the black hole of sin.

The ingredient that makes this possible is Chelbenah (galbanum). Even though Galbanum had a most foul smelling gum resin, it was essential for the Ketoret. If you're thinking that only a small bit of Chelbenah was contained in the Ketoret, think again. The Ketoret contained 350 pounds (just over 159 kilograms) of Chelbenah, 19% of its total weight! Why so much?

We go through life with many desires and aspirations. However we might not always fulfil our dreams. There will be stumbling blocks along the way. Our character traits might stop us going in certain positive directions. The message from the Ketoret is that we must use all our character traits for the good, even those character traits which we think are solely bad, we have to mix them with the rest of our character and through this mix enhance our whole being. We must not negate them, leave them without action, rather we must act on them and use them for the good. Someone may have a propensity to shed blood. Wouldn't it be best if he just buried this part of his personality? No. If he does, it will surface in a negative way. He has to work this attribute into the Ketoret so that his desire for blood leads him to Mitzvot (see Shabbat 156a, where for example he can act like a Mohel or Shochet).

A further idea brought by Chazal is that the incense used in the Bet HaMikdash, relates to us the message that when the wicked as represented by the Chelbenah and righteous join together, the latter can positively impact upon the former to produce a single, "fragrant" unified community. In fact the word Ketoret comes from the root Keshet, a tie or knot. By offering up the Ketoret we tied a lasting knot so to speak with Hashem, and by enjoining all spectrums of Jewish society in to our Minyan and uniting in our servitude of Hashem we form a strong relationship (as represented by the knot) with Hashem. The Zohar Shemot, Vayakhel states that it is a ruling of the Holy One, blessed be He, that whoever looks and reads the incense-offering portion ... will not be damaged that whole day. Next time we read the Ketoret let us take an extra few seconds to contemplate its deep meaning.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

At the beginning of the perashah, the Torah instructs the high priest to light the menorah – candelabrum every evening. One of its lights would miraculously stay alight constantly, thereby giving testimony that G-d dwells amongst His people. The verse (Tetzaveh 27:20) writes that the olives would be crushed by hand, and the first drop of oil from each olive would be used for lighting the menorah.

Although the Jewish People are compared to various pleasant- tasting or smelling fruits, which symbolize the beautiful traits and praises of our nation, the olive nevertheless, bears the strongest resemblance to us. The oil of the olive can only be extracted, when it is crushed or ground. The oil within an olive is not able to be self- extracted. Only through external pressure can its special oil be extracted. So, too, the inner essence of every Jew is beautiful, but in order for our beauty of character to shine forth, we need to exert

ourselves in the learning of Torah and avodat Hashem – service of G-d, in order to bring it out.

Preferably, we should become enthused, of our own accord, with the study and application of Torah and mitzvot, thereby cultivating our potential. However, often we also need external factors to cause us to rise to the challenge and succeed. When we as a nation are persecuted or exiled from place to place, this causes us to return to G-d and consequently, for Him to answer our prayers.

All the afflictions that we endure help to bring out our generosity, sensitivity and other exemplary character traits.

In life, most people find themselves preoccupied with a range of difficulties. Often, just having overcome one hurdle, they find themselves plunged into the next one. If not financial difficulties, they may have health problems, relationship dilemmas, or concerns about their children. In truth, however large or small a worry may be, it tends to take over a person's entire being. Even just changing a tyre or having a dental appointment, makes a person become completely preoccupied with it. We must remember, however, that

all these disturbances or difficulties are not sent by Hashem as objectives in themselves, but as a means to extract our true essential beauty, as we draw closer to G-d by "rising to the challenge."

It is common for people to "wish away" their trials; yet, this is not the correct outlook. Trials are not pointless, they are there to be utilised as a springboard for inner growth and are, in fact, to our strongest advantage. When we use trials as opportunities for self-introspection and improvement, we come out feeling spiritually- fulfilled, having used them for their intended purpose. Recently, when giving a class to students of marriageable age, I advised them not to be despondent about not having yet found a suitable partner. Rather, they should utilize it as an opportunity to come closer to G-d through prayer, as this situation will probably never return.

Next time we feel overwhelmed or frustrated by a problem, let us draw ourselves closer to G-d and consider how He wants us to face it, thereby maximising the opportunity of this challenge.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ABBA

Rabbi Abba was among the great Amoraim. He was the student of Shemuel, and though he learned from the great Babylonian Rabbanim, he often traveled to Eretz Israel to learn Torah from its Rabbanim.

The Gemara recounts that Rabbi Abba traveled to Eretz Israel by sea, and when his boat arrived by the shores of Akko, he embraced the earth. He had the merit of seeing Rabbi Yochanan, who headed the great yeshiva of Tiberias and was extremely old at the time. He also saw Resh Lakish (who died before Rabbi Yochanan). We also see just how much he loved Eretz Israel from a story found in the Gemara. Rabbi Abba purchased a plot of land in Eretz Israel, then returned to Babylon. However, what he didn't know was that another Amora, by the name of Rav Gidel, had previously begun negotiations to purchase that same plot of land. Rav Gidel went and complained about Rabbi Abba to Rav Zeira, who in turn told Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha of the incident (the latter were old friends of Rabbi Abba, and all three of them were among those who had come to Eretz Israel from Babylon). Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha said, "Wait until he returns for the holidays," meaning that they should wait until he comes back from Babylon to verify the story with him.

When Rabbi Abba came back, his friends asked him what was the law concerning "a poor man who awaits his portion, but then another comes and takes it." In other words, what was the law concerning a person who acts maliciously with the poor, trying to seize what awaits him before he has time to take possession of it? Rabbi Abba responded that such a person was a wicked man. And when he was asked why he himself acted in this way concerning the land of Rav Gidel, he replied that he was not aware that Rav Gidel had wanted to purchase it.

Rav Yitzchak bar Napacha therefore decided that he should give up the plot of land for Rav Gidel's benefit. Rabbi Abba replied that he didn't want to sell the plot of land, for it was his first purchase in Eretz Israel, hence it didn't bode well to sell it. Rather, he said that he was ready to give it to Rav Gidel as a gift.

For his part, Rav Gidel didn't want the land as a gift because of the principle that "one who hates gifts will live" (Proverbs 15:27). The Gemara concludes the story by saying that neither of them wanted to use the land in question, and so it was abandoned. This plot of land came to be known as "the land of the Rabbis" (see Kiddushin 59a for details).

Rabbi Abba lived temperately and was accustomed to praying that his Torah views be accepted by his colleagues. Among the Sages who had particularly great respect for Shabbat, Rabbi Abba is mentioned favorably. He had the habit of purchasing 13 selaim of meat in honor of Shabbat, and pressed his servant to prepare everything in the best possible way. Rabbi Abba apparently had many guests on Shabbat, and he wanted to honor them with the finest tasting meals. He lived an exceedingly long time, and in his latter years he was considered as a leading Halachic authority in Eretz Israel. He shared this distinction with Rav Ami, who was Rosh Yeshiva, while Rabbi Abba himself was the Av Beit Din.

Rav Ami was named Rosh Yeshiva after the death of Rabbi Eliezer ben Pedat, who continued the academy of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Eliakim. When Rav Ami moved the yeshiva to Cesarea, Rabbi Abba also joined him there. Rav Papa and Rav Ami called Rabbi Abba, "Our father of Eretz Israel."

The teachings of Rabbi Abba in Halachah and Aggadah are found throughout the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, as well as in the Midrashim. One of his famous parables, by which he explained what occurred between Ahasuerus and Haman, is cited in Megillah 14: "To what can the story of Ahasuerus and Haman be compared? To two men, one who had a mound in his field, and the other who had a pit in his. The latter thought, 'Who could sell me a mound?' while the other thought, 'Who could sell me a pit?' After a certain time, they encountered each other. The one who had a pit said to the one who had a mound, 'Sell me your mound,' to which the other replied, 'Take it for free! You're doing me a favor.' This is what happened when Ahasuerus said to Haman, 'The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit' [Esther 3:11]."

To show just how catastrophic honor-seeking is, Gemara Sanhedrin cites the explanation of Rabbi Abba on the verse that states, "After this, Jeroboam did not repent from his evil way" (I Kings 13:33). The Gemara asks about the meaning of "After this," to which Rabbi Abba explains: "After the Holy One, blessed be He, grabbed hold of Jeroboam by his cloak and said to him, 'Repent, and I, you, and the son of Jesse will walk in Gan Eden,' Jeroboam replied, 'Who will be in charge?' to which the answer was 'the son of Jesse will be.' Jeroboam then responded by saying, 'In that case, I want nothing of it!'"

Rabbi Abba died at a great old age, apparently in Eretz Israel. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE PRACTICE THAT A MOHEL SERVES AS HAZZAN ON THE DAY OF A BERIT

The Rama (Rav Moshe Isserles of Cracow, 1530-1572) writes that it is customary for a Mohel to serve as the Hazan in the synagogue on the day he performs a Berit. The Machshireh Mila (by Hacham Eliyahu Shama Ha'levi, Chief Rabbi of Aleppo, d. 1814) brings an explanation for this practice from an earlier source (listen to audio recording for precise citation), noting that serving as Hazan in the synagogue is akin to a Kohen serving in the Bet Ha'mikdash. The Talmud Yerushalmi relates that in ancient times, when somebody would be invited to lead the prayer service in the synagogue, he would be told, "Come bring our sacrifice!" – clearly indicating that a Hazan leading the prayers is compared to the Kohen in the Mikdash offering the sacrifices. Now circumcision, in a sense, is a type of "sacrifice," and thus the Mohel, who performs the circumcision, is like the Kohen serving in the Mikdash. It is therefore appropriate for him to also serve as the Hazan, leading the prayer service, which is similarly akin to ministering in the Bet Ha'mikdash.

The Machshireh Mila adds that the word "Mila" itself alludes to this practice, as it may be read as acrostic for the words, "Mohel Yered Lifneh Ha'teba" ("The Mohel shall go before the ark"), referring to the role of Hazan.

It must be noted, however, that, as the Shach (Rav Shabtai Ha'kohen, 1621-1662) comments, if a mourner is also present in the synagogue, he is granted precedence over the Mohel. As we know, it is customary for a mourner to lead the prayer service as a source of merit for the deceased, and this practice overrides the custom that a Mohel leads the prayer service on the day he performs a Berit.

Summary: It is customary for a Mohel to lead the prayer service in the synagogue on the day he performs a Berit, however, if a mourner is also present in the synagogue, the mourner is granted this privilege over the Mohel. ■

"There is something about attending a TAL event. It's like going to a Friday night hosted by family. The Rabbi and Raya always make us feel at home and they genuinely care about us. It's so nice to go to these events and always see different faces. People from all Jewish backgrounds and from everywhere. We all feel welcome in these events. This brings me a sense of unity that is hard to find sometimes with our Jewish community."

By Alegria Vaz Mouyal

Kids Time



Yossi & Co.



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 What are three meanings of the word mishpat?
- 2 What was lacking in the bigdei kehuna in the second Beit Hamikdash?
- 3 Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
- 4 When the kohen gadol wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the tefillin situated? -
- 5 What does the word tamid mean in reference to the tzitzit (two answers)

Answer
 1. 28:15 - 1. The claims of the litigants 2. The court's ruling 3. The court's punishment 4. 28:30 - The Urim V'Tumim - the "Shem Ha'Metorash" placed in the folds of the choshen. 5. 28:31 - The fabric of the me'il was made only of techelet. 6. 28:37 - Between the tzitzit and the miznetet. 7. 28:38 - 4. It always atones, even when not being worn 5. The kohen gadol must always be aware that he is wearing it.



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