

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Tetzaveh:*** **Exodus 30:1-10**
 Haftarah: **Ezekiel 43:27**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Hebrews 13:17-21**

Make an altar on which to burn ketoret – i.e. incense.

[Exodus 30:1]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:129-136;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *Tzuri v'Goeli [My Rock and My Redeemer]*

V'asita mizbe'ach miktar ketoret – Make/build an altar for burning incense Exodus 30:1a.

The Holy One is using *Mish'kan Discourse/Tabernacle* Download to transport us into and acclimate us to His Beauty Realm. If He is going to dwell in our midst, and live in His Presence, we need to know His court, chamber, and Throne Room protocol. He is therefore using the most trustworthy means of communication and Realm Travel of all – Creator-speak to show us eye-popping visions of the realm in which He sits enthroned and entertains visitors. What He is showing us is filling us to the brim with awe, wonder, and delight. Our Bridegroom-King certainly knows how to impress His chosen bride – and how to awaken bridal passion, fire, and fervor. He has dazzled our senses with other-worldly colors, shapes, textures, tastes, and scents. He has gotten our imaginations firing on all cylinders. He has resurrected our long-dormant awestruck hearts. He taken us on an adventure after adventure in the mysterious but beautiful Unseen and Eternal Realm in which He resides, and from which He oversees and reigns over all Creation. He just capped off the tour of His part of the Universe by making a promise that should endear our hearts to the *Mish'kan* forever: if we build a replica of His courts, chambers, fixtures, and furnishings according to His specifications and directions ... He will bring everything He has showed us in the Heavenlies to dwell with us right here on earth! As He phrased it:

There I will meet with B'nei Yisrael. And the Mish'kan will be made holy by My glory.

For I will kadash the tent of meeting and the altar.

I will also consecrate Aharon and his sons to eved to Me as kohanim.

I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

And they will know that I am the Holy One their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Holy One their God.

[Exodus 29:43-46]

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This is incredible news! The Creator of the Universe plans to actually make Himself – and all the wonders of His Beauty Realm - accessible to ordinary human beings. He plans to establish the Mish'kan as our *portal to the 'Secret Place of the Most High'*. He wants to abide in our midst. From between the wings of the *cherubim* He intends to sit enthroned, conduct kingdom diplomacy, and establish His reign. Separated from us only by a woven line veil He intends to issue decrees affecting our nation, all nations, and all of His Creation. He plans to patiently and thoroughly train us in the disciplines of superimposing the Unseen over that which is seen, the eternal over the temporal, the infinite over the finite, and the exquisite over the repulsive. He will teach us the secrets of choosing mercy over judgment, hope over cynicism, joy over despair, thanksgiving over complaint, wisdom over folly, truth over vain imagination, order over chaos, *shalom* over immersion in drama, and unselfish love over emotionally driven manipulation strategies. Behold, the tabernacle of God will be with man, and He will be our God, and we will be His People. See **Revelation 21:3**.

In Exodus 29:42-46, you see, our Bridegroom-King committed to both *meet with us* in the *Mish'kan* and *make His Official Resting Place* there. To the surprise of many, the specific location within the *Mish'kan* where the Holy One promised to meet with us and cause His Presence to rest was not that mysterious veiled chamber at the epicenter of the structure where only the High Priest was ever permitted to go. The Holy One promised to both *meet with us* and *rest His Presence among us* in a place out in the *Mish'kan's* outermost court where every man, woman and child was welcome² - *at the very entrance to the Mish'kan* – in the very public area surrounding *the brazen altar!* **Exodus 29:42-46**. Our King will meet with us, and speak with us, at the cherubim-embossed entrance veil known as the 'Way'. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!* **Matthew 5:8**.

If We Build It ... He Will Come and Abide With Us In It!

Our Bridegroom-King takes the Betrothal Covenant He has made with us very, very seriously. To Him that means that He has needs to make Himself, and the joy of His Presence, accessible to *every single one of us* – not just once a year, or even once a week – but *every single day*. That means His invitation is open to all of us - *from the least to the greatest, from the youngest to the oldest, and from the most sinful to the most pious*. Our King, though eminently regal, majestic and holy, is more than willing to meet with even the most rank commoner. He wants to walk with each of us *in good times and in bad*, and on *our days of personal and communal rejoicing as well as on our days of personal and communal sorrow*. He wants us to know He is fully committed to *be there* for us no matter the storm, no

² Assuming our careful guarding of a **basic tahor status**, the protocols pertaining to which He will lay out in detail in the Book of Torah known as 'Leviticus'.

matter the trial, and no matter what mistakes we may have made or what level of shame we may feel. It is an *incredible* promise, really. He is our God – and we are His People. And He wants to make it a 24/7/365 relationship – a relationship that is absolutely *unshakeable* and *unbreakable* - well ... *from His side* at least. He takes His part in this relationship very, very seriously – the question is, *do you and I?*

There is a way we can gauge how seriously we take our part in the relationship. Do you want to know what it is?

***What Does the Holy One Require of Us?
What Are the Elements of Our ‘Reasonable Service’?***

Having introduced us to the *kohanim* who will serve in the earthly Mish’kan, the Holy One is ready to teach us another aspect of *essential Kingdom avodah*. What is *avodah*, you ask? *Avodah* is the kind of *self-denying service that flows out of a full, inspired, motivated, overflowing heart*. *Avodah* is the kind of service rendered voluntarily and joyfully by one partner-in-covenant to another – especially to one *deeply loved and greatly respected*, whom one *passionately wishes to please, honor, and serve*. At its highest level such service is motivated by *deep admiration for and devotion to* the one being served, in appreciation of the extreme worthiness and essential goodness of the latter. The *Bride’s Essential Avodah*, we will come to discover in these studies, is the essence of true worship of the Bridegroom-King, in both *word and deed* – and, yes, in *spirit and in truth*.

The furnishings and chambers of the *Mish’kan* are merely lattices through which we are to view our world – Beauty Realm lenses through which we are to view people, nations, geography, climatology, and human affairs. Who are Aharon and his sons? They are merely windows through which we are to see Messiah and ourselves, working together, fully and meaningfully serving both the Holy One and the world. We who are being invited to traffic and serve in the Courts of are not mere slaves – much less soldiers - of the Holy One. Oh, no, it is much more intimate, and far more wonderful, than that! Each of us has been chosen by Him from the foundation of the world to be redeemed from the meaningless, self-destructive kind of life that the majority of men have been living since Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By and through His personal intervention on our behalf, each of us was marvelously rescued from a fate far, far worse than death. Each of us owes Him all our attention, all our affection, all our devotion, all our service, all our worship, and, indeed, our very lives. We are beloved covenant partners. We are cherished protégés. We are trusted confidantes. We are close personal friends.

The *Mish’kan* Discourse introduces the *Bride’s Essential Avodah* to us in *three layers*. As there are three chambers in the *Mish’kan*, each with its own protocol of

avodah, so are there three environments of our lives, each of which has its own protocols of *avodah*. To get a firm grasp on these three layers, think of the pattern which Moshe will later establish for us in Deuteronomy 6:5:

***You are to love the Holy One your God with all your heart [b'chol levavchah]
with all your soul [b'chol nafshecha]
and with all your strength [b'chol meodecha].***

These then are three layers of *avodah* we were created and are being empowered to perform out of love for our Divine Bridegroom: the layer of *avodah ha-levav*, the layer of *avodah ha-nefesh*, and the layer of *avodah ha-meod*.

1. Avodah Ha-Levav: The Prescribed Reasonable Service of the Bride's heart

The first level of bridal *avodah* introduced to us by the Holy One was the *avodah ha-levav* – *the prescribed reasonable service of the heart*. This level of *avodah* is both symbolized and instructed by the service of the *Kohen Gadol* [High Priest] in the innermost chamber of the *Mish'kan* –the *k'dosh ha-k'doshim* [holy of holies].

The *avodah of the heart*, like the humble service of the *Kohen Gadol* in the holiest chamber of all, requires us to focus all our attention, affection, resources, energy, and passion upon [a] the *Heavenly Persona*, [b] the *Empowering Life force*, and [c] the Essential Characteristics of the Bridegroom which form the epicenter of the *Mish'kan*. Translate the 'Heavenly Persona' as the *Abiding Presence of Great King*. Translate the 'Empowering Life Force' as the *Living Words delivered to us by the Bridegroom of Heaven*³. Translate 'the Essential Characteristics of the Bridegroom' as the Divine Attributes of EVERLASTING COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, LIFE-GIVING POWER, HOLINESS, WISDOM, MERCY and FORGIVENESS⁴. This is, of course, called for the most intimate, private, personal form of *avodah* imaginable. But it is not designed to operate independently. It is designed to co-exist with the two other layers of *avodah* taught to us by the *Mish'kan* Discourse.

What does *avodah ha-levav* look like in real time, you ask? If you want to know, take a look at the first three paragraphs of the *Sh'moneh Esrei* [i.e. *Avot*, *Geverot*, and *Kedushat Adonai*]. Then meditate upon the first line of the Talmid's Prayer as taught by Yeshua. And then take a look at the following verses:

- 1. Deuteronomy 4:29 [Know this day, and ponder it in your heart, that the Holy One Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.]***

³ The physical counterpart of this in the *Mish'kan* was the tablets of Torah.

⁴ The physical counterparts of these attributes in the *Mish'kan* were the *ark of the Covenant*, the beautiful *veil* setting off the inner chamber from the holy place, and the 'mercy seat' that set atop the ark - and thus 'veiled' the Torah, which was made of two Keruvim facing each other with wings outstretched.

2. **Deuteronomy 6:6** [*And these words with which I instruct you this day are to be on your heart*];
3. **Psalm 1:2** [*But his Delight is in the Torah of the Holy One, and upon His Torah he meditates day and night*];
4. **Psalm 119:11** [*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*],
5. **Proverbs 4:23** [*Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*], and
6. **I Kings 10:29** [*Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.*]

2. The Avodah Ha-Nefesh: *The Prescribed Reasonable Service of the Bride's Soul*

The second layer of *avodah* to which the *Mish'kan* Discourse of Torah introduced us is the *avodah of the soul*. This is the level of *avodah* described in the second part of the *ahavat Adonai* – *where we were commissioned to love the Holy One your God b'chol ha-nafshecha* [with all your soul].

What is *ha-nefesh* - the soul? And how can we love the Holy One with it, you ask? The soul is *the realm in which the human mind, the will, and emotions operate*. The mind is where we receive, internalize, assign value to, and process sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sensations of touch. The will is where we prioritize the appetites and urges of our eternal spirit vis-à-vis those of our bodies and decide on what courses of thought, speech, and action we will pursue based upon which appetites and urges we assign priority to. The emotions are what we allow ourselves to feel in order to either energize us to specific actions in accordance with our will – or what we allow to paralyze us while our will and its plan of action undergoes adjustment.

The *avodah ha-nefesh* is both symbolized and instructed by the service of the *family of the kohanim* [*ha-mishpachah Aharon*] in the middle chamber of the *Mish'kan* – *ha-k'doshim* [the holy (place)]. As there are three distinct components that make up the soul [i.e. the mind, the will, and the emotions], there are three distinct furnishings in relation to which *avodah* is performed in *ha-k'doshim* [i.e. the menorah, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense].

Notice that everyone called to perform the *avodah* of the holy place was a close family member – the father, Aharon, and his sons. Similarly the *avodah* of the soul is always primarily centered around and is designed to instruct our activities in our own households and our relations with our closest family members. The protocols of *avodah ha-nefesh* are designed to enable us to share the fruit of our *avodah ha-levav* with our spouses, children, parents and siblings. Hence in Deuteronomy 6:7 the very first thing we are told about what loving the Holy One with all our heart,

soul and strength will look like in real time will be that we will ***‘teach them (i.e. the life instructions of Torah) diligently to your children, and talk about them when you sit in your house’***

The three furnishings in the holy place as to which *avodah* were to be performed by the priestly family instruct us on the particulars of the *avodah ha-nefesh*. These furnishings are the menorah, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense. The *menorah* corresponds to the mind. Our reasonable Bridal *avodah* in relation to this component of the soul is to keep it burning, and casting steady and even light into the household where our family functions, evening to morning, forever. The *table of showbread* corresponds to the will. Our reasonable Bridal *avodah* in regard to this component of the soul is to *constantly refresh the bread supply*, as well as apply the *salt*, sprinkle the *frankincense*, and pour and pour out the *fine wine of the Kingdom* each Sabbath. The *altar of incense* corresponds to our emotions. Our reasonable Bridal *avodah* in this regard is to surrender the mixture of ordinary events and substances of our lives on earth to the fire of the Holy One in such a way as to cause a sweet, pleasing, fragrant aroma to fill our households.

The home, the household, the closest members of our family – and how we relate to them - these are the major testing grounds of *avodah ha-nefesh*. *Bayit shalom* [i.e. a state of wholeness and peace prevailing in the home] is the primary witness we are being trained by *avodah ha-nefesh* to manifest to the world.

What does properly performed *avodah ha-nefesh* look like in real time, you ask? Psalm 133 is the perfect picture: ***Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aharon, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Tziyon; for there the Holy One commanded the blessing – Chayei Olam [i.e. life beyond the veil].***

Consider the first three petitions of the *Sh’monei Esrei* – *Da’at*, *T’shuvah*, and *S’lach*. Consider also the three petitions in the middle of the Talmid’s Prayer Yeshua taught us to pray: 1. ***Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven***; 2. ***Give us this day our daily bread***; and 3. ***Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.***

Consider also the Psalmist’s prayer: ***Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your Torah ... Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors ... My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word ... I have chosen the way of truth; Your mishpatim I have laid before me ...***

Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way ... Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage ... In the midst of night I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments ... The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver ... Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day ... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path ... The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.... Great peace have those who love Your Torah; and nothing causes them to stumble ... My tongue will speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness. Psalm 119: 18, 24, 28, 30, 37, 54, 62, 72, 97, 105, 130, 165 and 172.

Look at Yeshayahu's description of the way in which the Mind empowered by the Breath of the Holy One works - *He will not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and with equity He will govern for the meek of the earth. Isaiah 11:3-4.* Look also at Yeshayahu's prophetic declaration: *You will keep him in perfect shalom He whose mind is fixed on You Isaiah 26:3.* Look also at Shaul of Tarsus' exhortations: *I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2.* And *Let this mind be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who ... made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant ... [He] humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the execution stake. Philippians 2:5-8.* And consider Yeshua in the Garden of Gat-Shemeni, saying: *“Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done”.*

3. The Avodah Ha-Meod: The Prescribed Reasonable Service of the Bride's Bodily Strength

The third – and most public - level of bridal *avodah* introduced to us by the Holy One in the Mish'kan Discourse is *avodah ha-meod* – *the prescribed reasonable service of our bodily strength*. This level of *avodah* is both symbolized and instructed by the service of the *priestly family* in the outer courts of the *Mish'kan*. The *avodah of bodily strength*, like the humble service of the *kohanim* in the outer courts of the *Mish'kan*, involves applying the life instructions of Torah in real interactions with people outside our nuclear families, demonstrating the Holy One's compassion and mercy in regards to the spiritual conditions of others, *cleaning up the messes we and they make as we all deal with the core issues of life, and making a distinction between that in life which is holy [i.e. YHVH-centered and powered and set apart to His Purposes and Use] and that which is common/profane [i.e. man-centered and powered and employed for man's entertainment and/or the advancement of*

men's agendas] on the one hand, *and between that which we encounter in life that is clean [i.e. that which leads to wholeness] and that which we encounter in life that is unclean [i.e. that which leads to divided loyalties and fragmentation of the soul]* on the other.

The three primary furnishings in outer court as to which *avodah* were to be performed by the priestly family instruct us on the particulars of the *avodah ha-meod*. These furnishings are the *entry gate* [or 'Way'], the *brazen altar*, and the *bronze laver*.

The priestly family was responsible for supervising the entry gate or Way into the *Mish'kan*. Part of that assignment was to inspect everyone and everything that sought to enter for 'cleanness' and for blemishes. Similarly, we are each responsible for guarding the entrance to our homes and hearts of people, things, words, and activities that would bring in that which is common/profane [i.e. man-centered and/or self-focused] and/or unclean [i.e. that which would lead to divided loyalties and fragmentation of the soul]. The priestly family was then responsible for leading, nurturing, and blessing those who entered the *Mish'kan* for holy purposes, particularly forsaking the ways of the world, turning from lawless behavior, surrendering all things to the will of the Holy One, and worshipping and communing with Him. The focal point of this *avodah ha-meod* was the brazen altar. And finally, the priestly family was responsible for maintaining its own purity despite interactions with all sorts of uncleanness, vanity, and profanity in others. The focal point of this *avodah ha-meod* was the bronze laver.

What does properly performed *avodah ha-meod* look like in real time? Consider Leviticus 19: ***Do not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. Do not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God Do not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. And the wages of him who is hired is not to remain with you all night until morning. Do not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God Do no injustice in judgment. Do not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. Judge your neighbor in righteousness. Do not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor. Do not hate your brother in your heart. Admonish your neighbor [according to righteousness] and do not bear sin because of him. Do not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.*** Leviticus 19:11-18.

Consider also the admonishments of Shaul of Tarsus in this regard: ***As we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let***

us use them: *if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Holy One; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.* **Romans 12:18.**

Daily let this be your prayer: *Teach me Your way, O Holy One, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.* **Psalm 27:11.**

The Aroma of My Son – It is Like the Fragrance of a Field That The Holy One has Blessed!

And now, let us get more specific with regard to the avodah of the golden altar of incense – a component part of the *avodah ha-nefesh* about which we spoke earlier. There is a particular fragrance/aroma/scent with which the Holy One wants to fill the earth like the waters cover the sea. It is a pleasing fragrant aroma emitted by heating a special blend of specific spices. *Sh'ma Yisrael* - it is time to bring the scents of the Courts of Heaven down to the earth.

*From the rising of the sun even to its going down My name is to be great among the nations;
In every place incense is to be offered to My name, and a pure offering;
For My name is to be great among the nations," says the Holy One of hosts.*

[Malachi 1:11]

Like everything else in the *Mish'kan* the golden altar of incense provides a reflection of – and both a repository and emitter of the *Kedusha* energy of – a facet of the *Beauty Realm of Heaven*. Somewhere in the Courts of Heaven, you see, there is a place where the fragrance of incense is perpetually rising. See **Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4**. What is the source of this fragrance? It emanates from the earth, from mortal men like you and me. Who is responsible for keeping the incense arising? The answer is 'a *kohen*'. Aharon and his sons were the *prototypes*; Messiah is the *archetype*. You and I are the intermediate reality that connects the two. So let us step back for a moment and put the whole incense discussion in its proper context.

Just as there are three furnishings in the secret chamber, so are there three disciplines that we must learn to practice there.

Secret Place Discipline #1: Avodat Ha-Shemen - The Discipline of the Oil

We have already read in these studies of what I like to call *the discipline of the oil*. We have learned that someone has to enter the secret place of the Most High at least twice daily to keep pure oil flowing in the *Menorah*. The ‘seven spirits’ of the Holy One mentioned in Isaiah 11:2⁵ must be provided a vessel through which to release the Divine Light of Genesis 1:3 upon the earth. The lamp of the Holy One must be kept burning.

So what is the problem? The problem is definitely *not the fire* – that comes from Heaven and is in inexhaustible supply. The problem is *the fuel* – it must come from earth. And some human being must supply it. Someone must cultivate and tend olive trees. Someone must harvest the olives. Someone must build and maintain and operate a press in ways that assure the *production of pure oil*, without excess flesh corruption. Once the oil is produced and strained, someone must collect it into containers. Someone must seal and store the containers. A kohen must receive the containers, inspect them, and in proper timing *pour out the oil into the lamps in perfect measure*. Someone must *tear the linen garments of righteousness the priest wore yesterday into strips, place them in the oil to function as wicks, make sure they catch fire, trim the burnt portions regularly, and see to it the fire sent from Heaven never goes out in the secret place* – even though no human being sees.

The discipline of the oil is the first *avodah* protocol to which we are called⁶. Aharon and his sons’ service of the oil was a shadow – on earth as it is in Heaven. Now it is our turn. Twice a day Beloved - for *no reason except the conviction that the Holy One is worthy of it*.

Secret Place Discipline #2: Avodat Ha-Lechem - The Discipline of the Bread

We have also very briefly discussed in prior studies the second discipline of the Holy Place – the one I call *the discipline of the Bread*. The second furnishing in the Secret Place is the *Shulchan Panim* – the *table of the Presence*. This is the table located in the secret place upon which loaves of unleavened bread were to be continually positioned. Each Sabbath they are to be replaced with fresh loaves. And the most interesting thing of all about the discipline of the bread is that the

⁵ The seven spirits (or seven-fold spirit) named in Isaiah 11:2 are the spirit of the Holy One, the spirit of *wisdom* [Hebrew *chokmah*] the spirit of *understanding* [Hebrew *binah*], the spirit of counsel [Hebrew *etzah*], the spirit of *might* [Hebrew *geburah*], the Spirit of *knowledge* [Hebrew *da'at*] and the spirit of the *fear of the Holy One* [Hebrew *yirat Adonai*].

⁶ Yeshua referred to this foremost secret place discipline as *the making of Tzedakah* [i.e. making righteousness; bringing elements of creation over which we have been given authority up to Divine Specification]. See **Matthew 6:1-4**.

bread is *never eaten*. This is the essential discipline of *denial of self*. Some call it the fasting lifestyle. A human being takes grain, grinds it, adds water and salt, kneads the dough, and prepares 12 loaves of bread. He sees the bread. He smells its sweet scent. His physical appetites are activated. He salivates and hungers like any man would. His stomach growls. But though no one would see if he snuck a bite – or even wolfed down bread to the point of satiation – he chooses to resist the cries of his physical appetite. Hour-by-hour. Day-after-day. He forces his body to focus on a deeper hunger than the hunger for physical bread – the hunger to do the Will of His Creator and represent His King on earth he has been commissioned and empowered to do⁷. Is the discipline of bread at work in your life?

Secret Place Discipline #3: Avodat Ha-Ketoret - The Discipline of the Incense

At this point in Torah the Holy One reveals to Moshe that He wants us to set up one more furnishing inside the inner sanctum of *Mish'kan* – and to establish the third essential secret place discipline. He has taught us the secrets of the amazing brazen altar in the outer court. Now He is ready to take us one step deeper in altar-life and instruct us regarding the *mizbe'ach ha-ketoret* [*i.e. the altar of incense*]. Unlike the brazen altar the Holy One described for us earlier this golden altar was to be located far *outside the view of the common man*. Once it was built and set in its proper place, no one who was not a kohen⁸ would ever see this altar. On the coals of this altar instead of grain and wine and the flesh of animals the *kohen* was to put only one thing – a special formulation of *incense*. This altar was designed to fill the inner chamber with *a sweet aroma of spices and billowing clouds of fragrant smoke*.

Twice a day Aharon was to go into the holy place and cause the holy place to be filled with smoke and the sweet fragrance of perfume⁹. Aharon was to do this by scattering something Torah calls *ketoret* - our English Bibles say *incense* – on the hot coals of that altar. **Exodus 30:7-8.**

V'hiktir alav Aharon ketoret samim b'boker b'boker
Aharon is to burn incense on [this altar] morning after morning

B'heytivo et ha-nerot yaktirenah
when he cleans out the lamps.

⁷ Yeshua referred to this secret place discipline as fasting. See **Matthew 6:16-18**.

⁸ Even the *Levi'im* [Levites], who will later be appointed as Aharon's servants to carry the furnishings when the camp moved, would probably never see this or any other of the furnishings in either the holy place or the most holy place, because before the furnishings were moved, the priests were to cover/wrap them for the journey.

⁹ The only other usage for the golden altar was to be once a year, on a special day about which we will learn much more later - *Yom Kippur* [*the day of atonement*]. On that day Aharon was to *sprinkle the blood of the community sin-offering* on the golden altar.

Uveha'alot Aharon et ha-nerot beyn ha-arba'im yaktirenah

And Aharon is to [also] burn [incense] before evening when he lights the lamps.

Ketoret tamid lif'nei Adonai l'doroteichem

Thus, for all generations, there will be incense before the Holy One at all times.

This introduces the third discipline of the Secret Place – what I like to call the *discipline of the pleasing, fragrant aroma*. Someone must *place sweet incense* on the golden altar and cause it to be acted on by the fire in such a way as to release a pleasing, fragrant aroma on earth. Someone must make sure the fragrance in the place of *avodah* is sweet and pleasing – not letting it become a bore, a chore, a burden, or – Heaven forbid - a stench.

The incense that Aharon and his sons were commissioned to burn on the golden altar was a mixture of five rare aromatic resins – what the Bible calls ‘sweet spices’ [Hebrew *samim*] as well as *stacte* [Hebrew *nataf*], *onycha* [Hebrew *shechelet*], *galvanum* [Hebrew *chelbanah*] and *frankincense* [Hebrew *levonah*]. See **Exodus 30:34**. Equal parts of these very diverse substances, each with its own distinct aroma, had to be compounded. Then salt had to be added.

Our Bridegroom *loves a fragrant aroma*, it appears. And in II Corinthians 2 tells us His favorite scent. Shaul declares:

Thanks [be] to the Holy One, who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

We are to the Holy One the fragrance of Messiah among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

[II Corinthians 2:14-15]

The discipline of the pleasing, fragrant aroma corresponds with an individual's private prayer life. See Psalm 141:2 for the details of the association. Yeshua taught us that prayer should be *in the secret place* and should consist of six contents – which correspond neatly with the five aromatic resins and the salt of the incense. What were the six components of secret place prayer that Yeshua taught us to blend and present? Let me list them for you:

1. *Recognizing the Holy One as 'Our Father' - i.e. not just as our Personal God, but as the God and Father of all men;*
2. *Acknowledging and pressing into the Holiness of His Name;*
3. *Asking him for His Kingdom to come and His Will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven;*
4. *Petitioning for immediate material needs – i.e. daily bread;*
5. *Forgiving the offenses of others in connection with seeking forgiveness of one's own trespasses against Him; and*
6. *Surrendering to His Leading.*

These six components are Divinely designed make our prayer life a sweet, fragrant aroma – like unto the *ketoret*. They constitute the pathways of discipline through which we are called to place everything in our life – whether we consider those things good or bad - before Him and surrender them to His Holy Flame. Twice each day – *morning and evening – perpetually*, as an *avodah* [service of love]. So, Dear Reader: *How are you doing with the discipline of the pleasing, fragrant aroma?* Are you faithful to follow the pattern set by Yeshua to bring about the blending the various aspects of your life – all your experiences, good and bad – into a sweet mixture? Are you seasoning all your experiences and relationships and interactions with salt? Is your *avodah* in the secret place producing the aroma of Messiah – or is what is coming forth from your mouth more like the stench of a spoiled-rotten shrew?

But What is Ketoret, Anyway? Of What Does it Consist?

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘incense’ in this passage is *ketoret*, *qof, tet, resh, tav*¹⁰. This word is usually translated as ‘*incense, smoke, or odor of (burning) sacrifice*’. Sometimes it is translated ‘*perfume*’, or *sweet-smelling smoke*. It is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *qatar*¹¹, meaning to *fumigate* or *fog*, or *fill an enclosed area with smoke*. Adding the Hebrew suffix *tav* to the end of this verb root means the fumigation/fogging *called for by covenant*.

Why *ketoret*? Why *smoke up* the holy place? Why fill the holy place and holy of holies with a *sweet-smelling cloud*? Perhaps you will recall that when the Holy One called His people to Himself on Mount Sinai He caused the whole mountain to be engulfed in “a thick cloud”. Exodus 19:16, 18 tell us:

***On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning,
With a thick cloud over the mountain***

Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Holy One descended upon it in fire.

The smoke on top of Sinai was the *chuppah*, or wedding canopy/shade spread by the Holy One for His Betrothed. It represented *His promise of intimate relationship and ultimate commitment*. Under the canopy of Heavenly Smoke He *took His* vows to the Redeemed Community. **Exodus 19:3-7**. Under this canopy He *lovingly spoke over us* the *Aseret HaDibrot* (the Ten Words of life) as the preamble to the *shitre eyrusin*, or betrothal covenant. Under this canopy He *claimed us as His own*, and *set us apart to Him* and to Him alone. The purpose of the *ketoret*, then, was to make sure Israel – and the mixed multitude of people of all nations that accompanied Israel out of Egypt – never forgot the *chuppah* or what happened there. Every time the *ketoret* touched the coals and the cloud of smoke arose –

¹⁰ Ketoret is Strong’s Hebrew word #7004. It is pronounced *keh-toe-rate*’.

¹¹ Qatar is *qof, tet, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #6999, it is pronounced *kaw-tawr*’.

every time the special fragrance of our Bridegroom filled the air - it was a reminder to all of us. It was like a “sticky note” on our refrigerator saying (Rabbi’s son paraphrase):

***Remember, My Beloved, that the things you see before you
in this Mish’kan you are building are only a shadow.***

***Your destiny is to come and meet with Me in My Bridal Chamber
and commune with Me face-to-Face.***

***You were not ready the first time I called you into that intimacy –
but if you study and walk out and base your life on the shitre eyrusin I gave you
on Mount Sinai, you can be ready the next time.***

Remember, Dear Reader, He will come *in the clouds*.

The Secret Things Belong to the Holy One

The common people never saw the *ketoret* fill the *mish’kan*. They had to trust that as they presented their various tithes, offerings, firstfruits and surrogates on the brazen altar and performed the *mitzvot* of Torah in their homes and communities’ day by day the duly appointed high priest was burning the *ketoret* on the golden altar in what was to them a world unseen. They had to trust that the smoke-cloud was ascending to the Holy One as a sweet savor by virtue of the actions of priests to whom righteousness had been imputed by reason of the covenant of the Holy One. But that is the whole idea of parsha *Tetzaveh*. After all, the verb at the root of the name *Tetzaveh* is *tzav*. The first letter of this verb root is *tzade*, the Hebraic symbol for a man in right standing with the Holy One. It pictures a son kneeling before His Father, and His Father placing His hand upon the son in blessing. The second letter in this root is *vav*, the Hebraic symbol for a peg, or connector, or nail – something that attaches what came before it to something else. The meaning of *tzav* is *to attach, or impute, righteousness to something*. The Holy One attaches/imputes righteousness. It *cannot be earned*. It *cannot be deserved*. The actions we do are merely *covenant confirming actions* [hence the *tav*, the symbol of covenant, at the beginning of the word *tetzaveh*]. And they are not sufficient of themselves – hence the addition of the *hey* at the end of the word. The *hey* at the end means they are merely passageways, portals through which we pass in order to receive further revelation and inspiration. As and to the extent we prove *faithful in small things*, you see, He will entrust *greater, more weighty things* to us. The secret things – the things done in the spiritual realm beyond our field of sight when we do covenant deeds [*mitzvot*] on earth – are like the *ketoret* that ascends from the golden altar of incense. We trust in our Great High Priest to provide the cloud covering – the *chuppah* of sweet-smelling smoke – which allows us to dwell in the Holy One’s Presence.

Is High-Intensity and Costly Service Corresponding to Avodah Ha-Ketoret Really Necessary Anymore?

It is one thing to believe; it is something altogether different to serve. It is one thing to bask in the Bridegroom's love, His forgiveness, and His empowerment. It is another thing altogether to embrace His Yoke, die to self-will, and live a lifestyle in which both one's *over-riding focus* and *highest joy* is found in *serving Him out of a heart overflowing with love*.

The Holy Place is a place where all we do is done *in secret* for an *audience of One*. No man can see anything we do in the Holy One's secret place. No matter what we do there, no human will be the slightest bit impressed with our spirituality. We will earn no man's favor there. We will get no recognition there. We will enter no man's consideration for a ministry promotion by reason of what we do there. In the inner chamber it is not about us or our ministry. It is about our Bridegroom-King, and Him alone. The Holy Place is where men go to pour love on our Beloved Covenant Partner for no reason except that He is Glorious and Good - and *deserves absolutely nothing less* than our full attention, time, and devotion.

The outer court aspect of our relationship with the Divine Bridegroom – the place at the brazen altar where we meet with Him – has *protocols*. The brazen altar is, after all, all about *communion* and *fellowship*. We go there with our friends. We enjoy His Presence. The secret place of the Most High is different. The secret place has something much more intimate than protocols. The secret place has *disciplines*. Immediately after describing the *discipline of the pleasing, fragrant aroma* the Holy One declared concerning the golden altar of incense ***kodesh kodashim hu l'Adonai*** - *[this altar] is a holy of holies unto the Holy One. Exodus 30:10*. Why did the Holy One instruct us to build and maintain two *kodesh kodashim* altars in the Mish'kan - one of *bronze* and one of *gold*? Why did He ordain for one of these altars to be located in the outer court of the *mish'kan* and the other in the holy place between the *Menorah* and the *Shulchan Panei* [Table of His Presence]? Why was one altar only for *ketoret* and the other altar for a variety of things ranging from the flesh of surrogate animals to grain to wine to salt and oil?¹² Why was one altar to be visible to all the world and the other to be completely hidden from view of ordinary men - for the eyes of *kohanim* only? Perhaps He did it this way because the Holy One wants us to know that *for every action in which we participate in the physical world there is a corresponding action that takes place, completely unseen, in the spiritual world*. Picture the *mish'kan* in your mind's eye - as you would see

¹² From a practical standpoint the placement of the altar of golden incense inside the *mish'kan* necessarily militated against burning anything on it that would create a high flame. A high flame such as is produced by oil or animal fat might burn a hole in the tent above it – not to mention smoke the priests out of the holy place.

it from a hill just outside the camp at the time of the morning or evening *tamid*. You can see the smoke rising from the brazen altar in the outer court and the flurry of activity around that altar is obvious. But you *cannot* see inside the chambers of the tent itself. You cannot tell what is going on there – if anything. Your tendency will be to focus your attention on what you *can* see, will it not? So it is with man. We are shortsighted beings. We tend to focus our attentions and energies on the finite, the temporal, the visible, and the manifest. *Out of sight* all too often equals *out of mind*. And *out of mind* all too soon becomes *tucked away in a haze of cloudy memory* behind a burgeoning mountain of to-do's and have-to's. We consider that which we can see, and therefore commands our immediate attention, to be what makes up 'real life'. And we gradually let that – the mundane, temporal details of life – define not only our *days* but our *destinies*.

Do You Have 'Inner Sanctum Eyes'?

Ah, but now close your natural eyes a moment - and focus your *spiritual eyes of faith* on the *mish'kan*. Try to look past the outer court, through the closed doors and curtains of the inner sanctum. Can you see with those spiritual eyes of faith that there is activity in the unseen realms as well? Can you see that every single activity in the unseen realm of the holy place corresponds to the activity in the outer court? Precisely as the *tamid* is being presented in the visible realm can you see the High Priest trimming the *menorah* and *presenting ketoret* on the altar of golden incense? Can you see the *keruvim* interwoven in the veil begin to glow with the brightened light of the trimmed *menorah*? Can you see the incense-cloud passing through the veil into the *kadosh kadoshim* [holy of holies] and presenting a pleasing fragrance to the Holy One?

And now for the *real test*. Are you ready? Take a deep breath. Focus even harder upon and look *even deeper* into the shadowy image of the High Priest in the holy place of the earthly *mish'kan*. As you look at the *mish'kan* through your spiritual eyes of faith can you see that what is happening in the unseen realm is *more real*, and *more important*, than what is happening in the visible realm that, just a moment ago, you thought was reality? If you can see this then you can understand the ministry of our Great High Priest, Messiah, Whom we are told is 'ever interceding' for us in the heavenlies. If you understand this spiritual principle you can see in every *mitzvah* of Torah in which you participate on earth a much greater heavenly significance and effect. If you have 'inner sanctum eyes' you can see what Yeshua was talking about when He said ***'inasmuch as you have done these things to the least of these my brethren, you have done them to Me'***. If you can see these things it is because the *Ruach* has begun to reveal to your heart what brilliant theologians, who rely only upon their intellect and powers of reasoning, have never understood - that *every mitzvah of Torah is a portal between the visible*

world and the unseen spiritual world. What seems insignificant to the human mind, you see, has eternal significance – not because of what *we* do – but because of what *He* does - in the unseen spiritual world that corresponds to what we do.

Do you now grasp it? In doing the *mitzvot* of Torah we merely become privileged to serve as co-creators - co-laborers with Messiah and His angels. We may see no physical results on earth, but that is quite understandable ... because *in and of themselves the mitzvot we do have no power at all*. Rest assured however that He Who has begun a good *mitzvah* in you - in your physical world - will be faithful to *complete it* in the unseen spiritual world which really matters.

The Importance of the Mizbe'ach Ha-Ketoret To the Narrative of Messiah's First Advent

It may come as a surprise to you, Dear Reader, that the exact place the narrative of parsha *Tetzaveh* leaves off – at the *mizbe'ach ha-ketoret* – is the place where the chronological accounts of the First Advent of Messiah Yeshua picks up. In the first chapter of the gospel account of *Lukas* (Luke), Lukas writes:

*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Y'hudah,
a certain Kohen named Zecharyah (i.e. Zachariah), of the priestly division of Aviyah.*

*Now it happened, while he executed the Kohen's office before the Holy One
in the order of his division, according to the custom of the Kohen's office¹³,
his lot was to enter into the temple of the Holy One and burn ketoret [i.e. incense].
The whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of ketoret [i.e. incense]¹⁴.*

*An angel of the Holy One appeared to him,
standing on the right side of the mizbe'ach ha-ketoret
[i.e. the altar of which we have been speaking throughout today's shiur].*

*Zecharyah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.
But the angel said to him, "Lo Tirah, Zecharyah [i.e. do not be afraid, Zachariah]
because your request has been heard,
and your wife, Elisheva, will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Yochanan.
You will have joy and gladness; and many will rejoice at his birth.
For he will be gadol in the sight of the Holy One, and he will drink no wine nor strong drink.
He will be filled with the Ruach HaKodesh, even from his mother's womb.
He will turn many of the children of Yisra'el to the Holy One, their God.
He will go before him in the spirit and power of Eliyahu,
**'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;
to make ready a people prepared for the Holy One.'***

[Luke 1:5-17]

¹³ According to the *minhag* [i.e. custom] of the priesthood the persons in a given order and clan of priests who were serving were assigned specific functions by lot. In the particular year in question, at the time his order [the order of the clan of Aviyah] served, Zecharyah was the one chosen by lot to offer *k'toret* (incense) on the golden altar of incense in the Holy Place.

¹⁴ See Psalm 141:2 for the association between incense and prayer.

When Messiah came to earth the first time there were men like Zechariah who were faithfully performing the discipline of the pleasing, fragrant aroma daily in the Secret Place.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's assigned verses from Exodus chapter 30 the Holy One gives Moshe instructions regarding the last furnishing of the *Mish'kan*, and regarding what part that furnishing would have in the great "passion play" which was to be performed on the stage of the *Mish'kan* by the Betrothed Community during the Betrothal period.

[A] Concerning which two furnishings in the Holy Place has the Holy One previously given instruction?

[B] Which furnishing does today's passage discuss?

[C] What are to be the dimensions of this furnishing?

[D] Of what two materials is this furnishing to be made?

[E] What "operating instructions" does the Holy One give for this furnishing? Be sure you note the "who", the "what", the "where", the "when", and the "why"?

[F] What was Aharon to do at this furnishing daily?

[G] What was Aharon to do at this furnishing once a year?

[H] What was NOT to be done at this furnishing?

[I] Look up the words "altar", "incense", and "horn" in Strong's and Gesenius. Write the Hebrew words that are given these English translations, and write definitions for each of the Hebrew words from which these 3 words come.

[J] Look up the word "*Shekinah*" in the "*Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*" or other resource on traditional Jewish thought. Write a short summary of what you find about the *Shekinah* and share it tonight at Shabbat.

2. In the Haftarah, *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel] concludes his narration of the prophetic vision he received regarding the altar and priesthood of the Millennial Temple. In today's aliyah he tells us what the Holy One had revealed to him will occur in relation to the *mizbeach* [altar] of burnt offering in the New Jerusalem beginning with the "eighth day".

[A] What does *Yechezkiel* say the *Kohanim* [priests] of the Millennial Temple are to do beginning on the eighth day?

[B] What does the Holy One say He will do in response?

[C] What relationship do you see between this verse [Ezekiel 43:27] and Exodus 29:42-46 [from yesterday's aliyah]?

[D] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the word our English Bibles translate as "accept" [KJV, NIV]. Write the Hebrew word in Hebrew letters, with vowel points, as well as in English transliteration. Try to find verses using this word in

various parts of the TaNaKh, and, with Gesenius as a guide, look for, and describe on your paper, the word picture that you begin to see developing. What, in other words, does it mean – Hebraically - for the Holy One to “*accept*” us?

[E] What verse of the *Sh'ma* is the instruction to approach the Holy One with ‘burnt offerings’ [i.e. offerings totally devoted to the Holy One, which are totally consumed by fire, and therefore represent the offeror’s total devotion to the Holy One] related to?

[F] What other general injunction of Torah is the directive to approach the Holy One with ‘fellowship offerings’ [i.e. surrogates of approach to be eaten together with other priests and worshippers, representing a worshipper’s willingness to share the blessings he has been given with others] related to?

3. In the suggested B’rit Chadasha reading for today the writer of Hebrews concludes his instructions for the consecration of Messiah’s true followers [those whom this author calls “*new creation priests of the Holy One*”]. His letter concludes with a discussion of the proper attitude [and conduct, because Hebraically speaking attitudes always dictate conduct, and actions always flow from thoughts] which the intended recipients of his letter - i.e. the physical descendants of Ya’akov who follow Yeshua - should have toward the elders of the Jewish communities in which they live. Keep in mind that there was not at the time this letter was written any “church” - or even any religion called “Christianity”. The Torah was still considered to be the Holy One’s instruction book for living. All Yeshua’s followers were still coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the *Moedim of Leviticus 23*. The ***Shabbat*** [Friday night at sundown until Saturday night at Sundown] was still the time when people stopped work, acknowledged the Holy One as Creator and Redeemer, and chose to get together to recite Sabbath prayers and study the weekly Torah and haftarah readings together. Messianic believers remained fully part of the Jewish community.

But, alas, an evil wind of change was in the air. The dark energy that would eventually result in the division between Messianic believers and the Jewish community – an evil that still exists today - was the essential reason for the writing of this letter. The writer pleaded with the Jewish believers to *resist the evil wind*, and remain connected to their Hebrew roots, to the Jewish sages, and to the elders of their communities – who dispensed wisdom according to the Torah.

[A] Who are new creation priests told to “obey”?

[B] In Strong’s look up the words our English Bibles translate as “*rule*”, “*obey*” and “*submit*” in verse 17. Write the Greek words and their definitions.

[C] Remember that this letter was written by a Hebrew to Hebrews and that the thought process behind the writing was certainly Hebraic thought. Bearing this in mind, search out the Hebrew words that would correspond most closely with the Greek words you wrote in response to the preceding question. What are those Hebrew words, and what are their meanings. Considering that there was nothing

even remotely resembling an organized “Church” at the time of the writing of this letter, and that in chapter 10, verse 25, the Jewish believers were told not to quit “*episynagogue-ing*” (as the manner of some converts was), who specifically do you think the writer was saying the Jewish converts should *obey* and *submit* to?

[D] How could the people who served in the synagogue in the first century be said to “*watch for the souls*” of Messianic Jews of the First Century?

[E] If someone who you have allowed to be in a position of “*spiritual authority*” over you exercises that “*authority*” without joy and enthusiasm toward you, what is the result?

[F] Verses 20 and 21 constitute a rabbinic-type blessing upon the readers of the letter by the writer. Write this blessing down and receive it as your own.

May you have a glorious Sabbath, as He calls you into His Secret Place!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:129-136 [Peh]

*Your testimonies are wonderful;
that is why my soul esteems, treasures, and keeps watch over them.
The entrance of Your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your mitzvot.*

*Look upon me and be merciful to me,
as Your custom is toward those who love Your name.
Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me
Redeem me from the oppression of man, that I may keep Your precepts.
Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes.
Rivers of water run down from my eyes,
Because men do not esteem, treasure,
and keep watch over Your Torah.*