

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayikra:*** **Leviticus 2:1-16**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 43:26-44:5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Hebrews 10:8**

With finely sifted flour he is to draw near ...

[Leviticus 2:1(b)]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 106:4b-12;

This Week's Amidah prayer Focus is the *Geruvot*, the Prayer of His Powers, Part II

V'nefesh ki-takriv korban minchah l'Adonai - And any soul that draws near to the Holy One bringing an honor-gift of grain ... *solet yihyeh korbano* - with finely sifted flour is he to draw near ... *v'yatzak aleiha shemen v'natan aleiha levonah* - and on it he is to pour oil and sprinkle frankincense. **Leviticus 2:1a.**

Why are we suddenly smelling *freshly ground grain, olive oil, and frankincense*²? Why are we tasting *salt*³? Why does our camp in the middle of the desert feel like a threshing floor at harvest time? What does the earth's annual yield of crops like barley and wheat have to do with the Creator's relationship with mankind? If you do not know, Beloved, just try to imagine life on this planet – for man or beast - without these things.

We Will Come Rejoicing ...

There is a beautiful, lilting *sound* calling to us from the *Mish'kan*. Could it be the Voice that spoke the cosmos into existence? Could it be the Voice that called Adam's name in the Garden? Our forefathers were very familiar with that sound. At long last, we are beginning to get familiar with it as well. It is the Voice of our Beloved. He keeps reminding us that He does not see us as we see one another. He does not define us by our worst moments. He wants us to know that He does not

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² *Frankincense* [Hebrew, *levonah*], is an aromatic resin derived from *Boswellia* trees. It is believed to have many important effects on human beings, including soothing stress and anxiety, improving memory, balancing hormones, boosting the immune system, killing viruses and bacteria, aiding digestion and circulation, and facilitating the healing of cuts, scrapes and wounds, and fighting off inflammation.

³ *Salt* [Hebrew, *malach*] is a crystalline compound consisting of sodium [Na] and chloride [Cl]. It is formed/deposited on earth through natural processes incident to the evaporation of salt water. Biblically, it serves as a reminder/residue of [a] the Great Flood, which caused salt water to cover the earth, and [b] the folly of Lot's wife. Salt itself is not pleasing to the palate, but in small does it stimulates human taste buds and, as a consequence, enhances the palatability of other substances. Salt is resistant to fire, and does not burn but melts. When added to flames, it turns them bright yellow. Outside the *Mish'kan*, salt is used primarily for food preparation (koshering and brining), as a seasoning, and as a preservation agent.

critique our every action, reaction, statement, or thought. He does not fixate on our past or present rebellion. He does not roll his eyes at our pettiness. He does not wag his finger at our lapses of judgment. He does not judge us for our edgy, post-traumatic brokenness. He chooses instead to look at us through Redeemer's Eyes. He chooses to look right past our *stiff necks*, our *faults*, and our *folly*, toward the vast, untapped reservoirs of potential that He knows exist within us (because He put them there). He sees the seed of a good and faithful servant in us. He sees the spark of holy fire in us. He sees the possibilities for bloodline-redemption in us. He sees the makings of every-family-on-the-face-of-the-earth blessing in us. He sees the hope for Creation's restoration in us. So, He is investing tons of FACE-TIME, MANIFEST PRESENCE, and DOWNLOAD AFTER DOWNLOAD OF REVELATORY WISDOM in our humble camp. He wants to empower each of us to subordinate *our base fleshly urges, appetites, and desires* to His Wonderful Will. He wants to teach us to effectively resist, and ultimately conquer, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. He wants to radically upgrade our vocabulary and communication skills. He wants to open our spiritual eyes, enabling us to see through the pseudo-intellectual fog that fallen men walk around in. He wants us to know that we were made for a much higher purpose than debating abstract, undefinable concepts like 'morality' and 'justice'; than getting constantly distracted from mission and purpose by the lashon hara of interpersonal conflict or inter-cultural drama; than getting manipulated into frenzies of outrage over this or that allegation of injustice or scandal; or than dividing up into warring camps over issues of philosophy, ideology, politics, pseudo-science, and/or religion. That is why we are hearing His Voice calling out to us from the *Mish'kan* even now. He is calling us to shake off the world's darkness and come into His glorious light. He is calling us to awaken to our true identity, come out of our cultural comfort zones and personal priority matrices. He is calling us to break free of toxic behavior and reaction patterns. He wants us to toss aside unproductive coping mechanisms. He wants us to step across the boundary line that separates the common from the holy and divides everything whole, healthy, and fruitful from everything fragmented and dysfunctional. He is inviting us to walk and talk with Him, become enthralled by His Beauty, and *be made whole* in His Presence. He wants to clear our minds of the 'futile thinking' and 'darkened understanding' of the nations, so He can begin to teach us His Ways of Mercy and Wisdom. He wants to enroll and activate us in His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation.

This is the thrust of *Vayikra* [i.e. 'Leviticus'] – the third book of Torah. This book describes *the level of honor we were designed to live*. It introduces us to *the special qualities of dignity and beauty that we, as the Holy One's Courtiers, are to exhibit for His glory*. It is the course-book that the Holy One has designed to teach

us the kind of diplomatic relations that we, as specially selected emissaries of His Kingdom, are to have with our fellow human beings and with the other species and elements of the Created order.

***The How-To Book On Bringing the Beauty Realm –
i.e. the Culture of Heaven’s Courts – to Earth, In Real Time***

The Holy One wants us to be *with Him, and walk, and talk with Him, where He abides*. He wants to train us to function in two worlds at the same time – specifically, He wants us to be *seated with Mashiach in heavenly places, learning Torah at His Feet, and catching both His Passion and Redemptive Vision for mankind and Creation*, even as we walk through the tough challenges of this world. But He knows that, without His help, we are wholly incapable of bridging the great divide that exists between us. So He gives us the first few chapters of *Vayikra* to serve as a *road map*, as it were, that will enable us to make the transition from the status of fractured souls in a fallen world into holy courtiers in and effective ambassadors of His Kingdom.

The first few chapters of *Vayikra* – the ones we study this week - are just designed to help us ‘*overcome the albatross*’ of our fallen humanity enough to enable us to gain entry to the Courts of our King. We know instinctively that it is dishonorable, and considered an act of hostility, to barge into, or even to come empty-handed into, any king’s presence; these chapters teach us how to approach the King, what to bring with us when we come, and how to present it respectfully, according to appropriate protocol. The rest of the book will teach us the protocols of appropriate honor, dignity, behavior, and service *while we are in - and between our visits to - those Courts*. *Vayikra* therefore represents the pinnacle of revelation to which *B’reshit* and *Sh’mot* have been building – and the platform of both Covenantal privilege and responsibility from which the remainder of Torah will emanate. We are learning that since the beginning the whole idea has been to call forth and prepare a *Bride-people* on earth that will respond with *sincere enthusiasm, ecstatic joy, and persevering patience* to the Bridegroom-King’s empowering call to ‘***Become holy as I am holy***’.

Vayikra is not only a textbook of practical instruction on how ordinary men and women can be transformed into a *Bride-people*; it is also a picture book overflowing with stunning imagery showing anyone having eyes to see exactly what *becoming holy like Him*, in order to serve as His emissaries, looks like in *real time*. The Creator Himself is the One Who authors and finishes the project of bringing real-time holiness forth from ordinary people through the effectual working in us our mortal bodies of His *Empowering Breath, His Transforming Words, and His Amazing Love*. It now is starting to make sense of us why Hebrew

children are encouraged to study this Book of Torah first. It is not because this Book constitutes ‘easy reading’; it is so that Hebrew children can learn from the youngest age possible how to approach the Holy One and relate to their fellow human beings in *appropriate ways* – *i.e.* in ways the Holy One has Himself established and has promised to bless. Now we are ready to press forward - and start getting very, very practical.

Let Me Know if This Hurts!

The process the Holy One is unfolding for us is *more than a little bit messy*. At times it is so personal that it can make the casual reader feel downright uncomfortable. But that should be altogether to be expected, for as we have discussed this Book sets forth the *eternal protocol for the ultimate extreme bridal makeover*. This Book lays out the *drastic make-over process through which the Holy One intends to make us His chosen Bride-to-be radiant and glorious* and prepare us to be presented to Him and to the world as a Bride without spot or, blemish. If the likes of you and me are to be ‘made over’ into vessels of holiness fit to dwell in the chambers of the King and represent His Heart to the nations ... well, the process of make-over is going to have to be radical indeed.

Thinking and Acting Like the Bride Our Bridegroom Calls Us and Empowers Us to Be

It should be dawning on us right about now that if we will just heed the essence of what is discussed in the first parsha of sefer *Vayikra* what we are going to learn is nothing short of the critical lesson of *how the Holy One wants us to approach and commune with Him*. What a *novel idea*. Actually interacting with Him on *HIS TERMS*? Actually doing this ‘relationship’ stuff *HIS WAY*? Well if I may say it Dear Reader ... it is *about time*, is it not? For far too long have we not approached Him as *spoiled children* – demanding in selfishness and immaturity that He appear and bless us whenever and however we want. Have we not treated Him as *our slave* and lackey, saying as we nervously glanced at our watches the virtual equivalent of: “*If you want to talk to us, you had better show up now, God – we’ve only got a few minutes to offer You in the midst of our busy schedule!*”

Is it not time to put away such childish attitudes? It is time to seek out and walk in *His ways, His timing, and His protocol*, as a passionately devoted, maturing Bride. Let us search out and learn the secrets underlying the *korbanot* [methodologies of approach] the Holy One has set out for us in His Torah. He Who knows us best has wisely and lovingly laid out for us a pathway back to the Garden. He has *made a way where there was no way*. He has set forth in the Book of Leviticus a pathway pursuant to which He desires for us not only to *approach Him*, but to *receive His love, to commune with Him, to interact with Him, and to honor Him the way the*

world needs to see Him honored. Is it not time we began to *respond to Him* as a Bride - letting *Him* lead for a change in our dance of love - instead of calling meetings whenever we want to, setting our own order of ‘service’, and demanding that He respond to us on our terms as a parent responds to the cries of a spoiled toddler?

We got our first taste of the pathway established for us in yesterday’s study when the pathway being revealed was the pathway of the *korban olah*. We learned that the *korban olah* was Divinely designed as the step of total surrender of one’s life, one’s body, one’s soul, one’s personality, one’s hopes, one’s dreams and aspirations, one’s likes and dislikes, one’s pride, one’s talents, one’s very essence - to the fire on the altar of the Holy One — counting it all loss in order to have the privilege of knowing and communing with the Holy One. We began to see that *korban olah* was what Shaul of Tarsus was talking about in Romans 12:1-2 when He said that *in light of the mercies* - i.e. the covenant blessings poured out by the Holy One just because He promised them to our father Avraham - *our reasonable service is to present our bodies as a ‘living sacrifice’, holy, acceptable unto the Holy One.*

How and when are we to ‘present our bodies’ as a ‘living sacrifice’? The answer is *in accordance with the Holy One’s instructions, of course.* Otherwise we are making the “*strange fire*” offering of Nadav and Avihu – or a form of golden calf worship like unto that described in Exodus 32. Ah but those are stories for another day. Today our focus is not upon ‘strange fire’ or golden calf worship. Our focus today is upon how we *think about*, how highly we *prioritize*, and *what we choose to do* – and *refrain from doing* - with the physical, material things of this world. The Holy One begins with these words: ***V’nefesh ki-takriv korban minchah l’Adonai ...*** – i.e. *when a soul draw near the Holy One with a prescribed grain portion ...* [Leviticus 2:1] Oh my! Just when we start getting serious about walking with the Holy One like Avraham did, and want to respond to His Call and enter His Courts and commune with Him, alas, we find that our ‘stuff’ – and our attitudes and opinions concerning about it – are right square in our way. What’s ours is ours, right? Or ... is it true that one cannot serve both the Holy One and Mammon?

Step II to Intimate Covenant Communion: The Pathway of Korban Minchah

The subject of today’s aliyah is the Holy One’s empowering protocol for making something the Hebrew text calls *korban minchah*⁴. In King James’ day the English translators chose to translate this Hebrew phrase as ‘*meat offering*’. In that day, you see, the term ‘meat’ was not used to describe animal flesh as it is in modern

⁴ ***Minchah*** is also the name by which the afternoon prayer service in the synagogue is called.

English, but was instead used to describe grain and products made therefrom⁵.

Think about Kayin. Torah tells us that his attempted approach was with *minchah l'Adonai*. **Genesis 4:3**. Think about Ya'akov, who ordered his men to present his estranged brother with *minchah l'Esav*. **Genesis 32:13**. Think of Yosef's brothers, who presented the Egyptian nobleman they knew as Tzafanat-Paneach a package of fruits of Kena'an, along with balm and honey, spices and myrrh, pistachios and almonds, for a *minchah l'ish*. **Genesis 43:11**.

The Holy One's *korban minchah* protocol begins with these instructions: ***When anyone approaches the Holy One with a minchah, his surrogate is to be of fine flour [Hebrew solet]. And he is to pour oil on it and put frankincense on it. Leviticus 2:1***. What meaneth this? What wonderful secrets lie shrouded in the mystery of the *minchah protocol*?

1. Understanding the Essence of Minchah

Minchah is a term that arises out of mature Covenant relationships. It refers to a voluntary gift of enthusiastic appreciation made by a *vassal* [the weaker party to the Covenant] to his *suzerain* [the stronger party to the Covenant] *in recognition of all the blessings of shalom and physical provision he, the vassal, is enjoying by reason of his participation in the Covenant relationship*. This is a recognition that without the much more important participation of the stronger covenant partner, none of the *shalom* or physical provision the vassal enjoys would be possible.

To approach with a *minchah* is to acknowledge and declare the vassal's total dependence upon the *suzerain's* performance of His part of the Covenant undertakings. As was the case with the *korban olah*, the approach of *minchah* is not by command – but according to Divine invitation. The Holy One knows we whom He has redeemed want to approach Him, and commune intimately with Him, and both receive His counsel and bask in the delight of His Presence. He planted those desires in us. He also knows however that in our fallen human state *we do not have the slightest clue how to do any of those things*.

Our Bridegroom-King is Eternal, Immortal, Omniscient, Benevolent and Holy. We, on the other hand, are altogether temporal, mortal, short sighted, selfish, and ordinary. If He does not help us – indeed pave the way for us - we will get lost

⁵ The Hebrew word *minchah* is believed to stem from the related Hebrew word *menuchah* – and the verb root *nuach* – both of which refer to *resting, quietly and peacefully reposing, and dwelling at ease*. What is the connection between rest, repose and grain and grain products? Only when men find a place of rest and quiet repose in which to dwell can they safely plant, cultivate, and harvest a slow growing life force like grain.

before we get started. Without His enabling, we will never be able to even find Him - much less interact with Him on a meaningful level when we do.

The One Who created us longs to commune with us where no human being – not even Moshe, the friend of the Bridegroom - can enter without invitation and protocol. His Presence is too Holy. His Glory is too weighty. So if He wants to meet with us He is going to have to make a way where there is no way – and then provide a trustworthy guide to lead us along every step of the path. What we are unable to do on our own, He has to empower – and then train - us to do. He not only has to *pave for us a way*; He has to *teach us the essential protocols we will need to complete the journey*.

2. The Hebraic Meaning of the Minchah

As we have discussed previously in these studies, each of the *korbanot* called for by Torah represents *an essential protocol for recognizing, meeting, and atoning for a basic human need*. And as we have also discussed, each *korban protocol* constitutes a mirror image on earth of a great event of atonement and empowerment that He has choreographed and accomplished in Heaven. Keep those things in mind as you meditate on each of the *korbanot protocols*.

Today's aliyah contains the Creator of the Universe's instructions to His Beloved Bride-People as to how to make *korban minchah*. We now know that the first word of this phrase, *korban*, means *intimate approach*. But what does the second word, *minchah*, mean? *Minchah* refers to a voluntary gift of enthusiastic appreciation made by a *vassal* [the weaker covenant partner] to his *suzerain in recognition of all the blessings the vassal is enjoying by reason of the Covenant relationship*.

The Holy One does not need, and has no use for, the grain, oil, or frankincense. He simply does not need, and has no use for, the material things of our *korbanot*. What He wants is the sweet time of intimate fellowship and sharing counsel with us. None of the *korbanot* even really go to Him. It is US who need these things, not Him. We need them *desperately*. The Holy One knows that separating, preparing, and surrendering them, and approaching the Throne of the Bridegroom-King with them in hand, are all process that meet a deep and ever-present human need in us. Let's talk about that need, shall we?

3. The Specific Essential Human Need Which the Holy One Empowers Us to Address and Remediate Through the Korban Minchah Protocol

As we have previously discussed, each of the *korbanot protocols* given to us by the Holy One at Sinai is specifically designed to meet and atone for one of the basic human needs man has as a result of the Fall. The Holy One desires to restore each of us to our unique presentation of man's previous glorious estate. But He knows

that only He – working in cooperation with the human being – can bring about this restoration.

The basic human need that the *minchah protocol* is designed to address, meet, and atone for is the need to break off the lies of the Serpent about what attitude toward and relationship with the material things in this world we who are created in the image of the Holy One are supposed to have. When did the tendency to misapply, misuse, and deal selfishly with the material things of this world come into play? Again, it was in the Garden of Eden. At first Adam knew what everything was and what it had been created for. He named every creature – prophetically declaring its identity, purpose, and destiny on behalf of the Holy One. But then one day along came Chava, under the hypnotic spell of the Serpent, holding out a half-eaten piece of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and suggesting to Adam that he should take it because it was ‘good for food’, and ‘[like candy] for the eyes’, and ‘to be indulged in lustfully to make one wise’. And from that day forward mankind has been unable, without Divine enlightenment, to see what the true purpose of the physical, material things of this world are. Instead we live in a ‘haze’ of Serpent lies about the physical and material realms. We have lost the ability to see the physical, material things of this world for what they are – and for what they are not.

As a result, we think things are food which are not food. We treat things as our personal eye candy that were meant for something totally different. We respond to physical, tangible things that are designed and intended for Divine redemptive purposes as if they were our private treasure of knowledge, by which we become able what is ‘good’ and what is ‘evil’. And we are so poisoned in our minds, emotions, appetites, urges, and vision by the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the Serpent-speak that came with it that without Divine help and guidance we are totally helpless to resist the inexorable pull of the soul-tie we have entered into with the physical, material things of this world.

Not to worry - that is what *korban minchah* is all about. The *minchah* protocols of Torah are designed to meet this defect in the human mind, heart, and soul head on. Our self-centered, lustful approach to the material things of this world has to be dealt with. Essential to the healing, restorative protocol, however, is man’s awakening from the post-hypnotic suggestion of out-of-control appetites, urges, and fleshly desires, and the re-alignment of his vision and perspective on material things with that of His Maker. To make *korban minchah* man must recognize, acknowledge, and embrace the reality that nothing material is his to *keep* or *delight in a fleshly or self-centered way*. Everything that passes through a person’s hands is only ‘on loan’ from the Creator and subject to his stewardship for the purposes of the Covenant.

To what can the protocol for making *korban minchah* be likened? It can be likened unto that part of the prayer the Master taught His talmidim to pray to the Holy One which said: ‘*Give us this day our daily bread.*’ The *minchah* protocols awaken us to the reality that it is the Holy One – our suzerain - not our own labor or intelligence, that enables us to acquire possession and use of physical things.

Korban minchah presents a Hebraic picture of someone – an individual worshipper or a nation – adopting a posture and attitude of *totally surrendering all material possessions and acquired properties* to the use ordained for them by the Holy One. Think of our Beloved Rabbi’s signal exhortation: **... after all these things the Gentiles seek. But your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. So [as for you], seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** Matthew 6:32-33.

4. The Symbolic Meaning of the Grain of the Field

Korban minchah is the protocol through which man finds joy and reconnection with the Creator by surrendering our “stuff” – *i.e.* all that we have produced or acquired through labor, gift, or inheritance – back to the Holy One to do with it as He wills. The Hebrew word *minchah*⁶ is translated by KJV as “meat”, but it is not *animal flesh* as today’s English vernacular would have you believe. It is *grain* – and, in some instances, products made from grain. It is the kind of stuff of which *Kayin* [Cain] brought a few grains as a token gift to the Holy One in Genesis 4:3⁷. Why is grain an essential surrogate? Because grain is *the most basic staple of life*. If you want bread, you must have grain. And while man cannot live by bread ALONE, the undeniable truth is that without grain the life of man is severely compromised.

As was witnessed in the Yosef narratives of Egypt grain is often not only a key factor in a nation’s prosperity but is *essential to its very survival*. Think of the ravages drought and famine brings, and you will see how precious grain is. Grain is therefore an extremely valuable commodity. For this reason, for millennia grain served a major currency of trade. Grain therefore came to represent not only food but *every material thing that could be obtained through commerce*. Grain became a

⁶ *Minchah* is *mem, nun, chet, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4503, it is pronounced *meen-khaw*. The verb root of this word is *nachah, nun, chet, hey*, pronounced *naw-khaw*. Strong’s indicates this verb root is unused in Scripture. He opines that it means to *apportion* or *bestow*. Other lexicographers say it means to *bring low*, perhaps referring to the process of cutting grain with a scythe, thus bringing it from an upright, vertical position to a horizontal one, level with the earth.

⁷ In Genesis 4:3 we are told: *V’ayavei Kayin miperi ha-adamah minchah l’Adonai* [Kayin brought some of the produce of the earth as a *minchah* unto God]. *Minchah* is also the term used by Torah to describe the gifts Ya’akov presented to Esav in Genesis 32, and the gifts Yosef’s brothers presented to Yosef [then known by them only as *Tzafanat-Paneach*] in Genesis 43.

metaphor for all physical things that a person might desire or acquire in the flesh. Grain therefore equated to ‘the stuff of life’ lived in the flesh and pseudo-intellect.

Armed with that understanding let’s jump into the text of Torah and see what the Holy One has to say about this wonderful stuff called grain. The opening instruction of the aliyah is:

V’nefesh ki-takriv korban minchah l’Adonai

And the soul who approaches the Holy One through the surrogate of grain ...

solet yihyeh korbano v’yatzak aleiha

the grain he brings must consist of the best grade of wheat meal.

shemen v’natan aleiha levonah

On it, he shall pour olive oil and place frankincense⁸.

[Leviticus 2:2]

Grain does not fall from Heaven, however. Man must partner with the Creator to produce it. Man must till the earth and plant the seed. The Holy One must provide the right combination of light, heat, and rain for the seed to sprout and grow. During the growing season, man must protect the crop from weeds, fungi, insects, birds, grass and grain eating animals, and, to the extent possible, from fire and foul weather. The Holy One must send the pollinators; man must send the harvesters, the winnowers, and the elbow grease necessary to grind the grain in to fine *solet*. According to the protocol the Holy One is establishing, man must also grow, harvest, and press olives, in order to soak the grain in pure olive oil. Man must then locate, harvest, grind, or purchase frankincense to sprinkle on the flour and oil mixture – all before bringing the precious amalgam to the *Mish’kan*, and humbly handing them to the *kohen*.

Approaching the Holy One with *grain*, huh? And not just any old grain, but the *best grade of ‘wheat meal’*? And the purest, highest quality of *olive oil* a man can produce too? And *frankincense*? That kind of an approach would cost *a small fortune*, you know. The stuff we are talking about could be used to feed one’ family, to buy things one has always wanted, or even to provide for the poor in the community. And for what purpose is a person to surrender this stuff? It is not even commanded! It is completely voluntary. Why would anyone go to all this trouble and expense, just to watch that costly grain, along with the oil and frankincense, get thrown on the fire of the altar and vanish in a flash of oil-fueled flame and a wisp of billowing smoke? **Leviticus 2:2.**

⁸ Frankincense [in Hebrew *levanah*] is a precious spice used for its calming, restorative, gently clarifying, and meditation-facilitating qualities. Oil of frankincense has stimulating, toning, and warming properties. The ancient world used it for treating depression.

“What does this have to do with intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom”, you say? Ah, look closer. In verse 2 we are told that what this is all about is the creation of “a sweet aroma pleasing to the Holy One”. We are talking Bridal perfume here, aren’t we? We are talking about creating an aroma pleasing to our Divine Bridegroom.

I am reminded of the story of Yitzchak’s blessing of Ya’akov. Do you remember what happened immediately after Yitzchak ate the meal Rivkah and Ya’akov prepared for him? Yitzchak called his son to him and said: ***Come near now and kiss me, my son.*** Ya’akov stepped right into Yitzchak’s embrace, and kissed him. And then Torah tells us that Yitzchak ***smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Holy One has blessed.*** See Genesis 27:25-27. Can you believe it? Even in one of his worst moments Ya’akov was empowered to emit a fragrance pleasing to his father.

It is far more than the disposition of agricultural commodities which the Holy One is establishing a protocol for here? Do you now see that what our Divine Bridegroom is getting at with all this talk of grain and oil and incense is the name that belongs on the title deed to *the stuff of our lives*. Do you now see that the *korban minchah*⁹ is the test of whether we *sh’ma* the words of the Holy One in Torah, echoed by Yeshua, that ***man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Holy One?*** See Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4. Do you now see that the point of making *korban minchah* is to acknowledge that everything that our efforts can produce, and indeed all that we possess, is for the pleasure of our Divine Bridegroom - and that we desire to claim none of it for our own?

The instructions of the Holy One regarding *korban minchah* teach us that *all our labor and creativity, and all they produce, is worthless – nay, even dangerous - if they are not both totally dedicated to the Holy One and totally submitted to His will*. These instructions also teach us that *material possessions are valuable only to the extent we see them for what they are - a medium of approach – an opportunity to come near - to the Holy One*.

The Holy One Himself must always be our exceeding great reward. *Acquainting ourselves with, aligning our hearts and priorities with, and doing His Will must always remain our ultimate source of pleasure. And His Wise Counsel must always remain our sole source of knowledge*. If we clutch material possessions to our

⁹ There are a number of presentations of *minchahot*: oven baked, shallow pan, deep pan, and griddle. All of these, however, consist of a mixture of *olive oil, ground wheat, salt, and frankincense*. In later periods, the word *minchah* would come to be the name by which the "afternoon prayer service" was known.

breast and call them our own, and assert our rights to *eat what we please* and *produce wealth* and *spend money* as we please – we walk *away from*, not toward, the destiny for which we were created.

You can, of course, always “have it your way” as the fast-food giant *Burger King* used to advertise; but that kind of “freedom” is even less healthy than that franchise’s famous double Whopper with cheese.

Materialism – the self-centered, myopic focus on the stuff of this world that Yeshua called the love of ‘Mammon’ – is a *disease*. And it works like a destructive cancer when placed in the context of the Covenant the Holy One established with Avraham - and hence with all who call Avraham our father in faith. Having an inordinate *attraction to* and *love for* temporal things, you see, leads to all kinds of evil. It leads us to *behave like territorial animals*. It leads us to *worry*. It leads us to *envy*. It tempts us to *covet*. It dares us not to *compare*. It leads us to *fear loss of possessions* to thieves, to robbers, to grifters, to the taxman, to terrorists, to typhoons, and to tornados. It leads us to protect and defend what we think of as our hard earned ‘property rights’. It leads us to *hate* those who have more – or those who need – or think they need – what the Holy One has entrusted to our care.

The more affection we have for the ‘stuff’ of this world the less we are capable of loving the Holy One our God. Remember after all that the first *mitzvah* of Torah in priority and importance is that we love the Holy One our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength/substance. Making *korban minchah* – going before the Holy One with humility and thanksgiving regarding one’s relationship with material things - is therefore one of the *five fundamental spiritual needs* of every human being who desires to worship the Holy One¹⁰.

***Getting Our Toxic Fascination With ‘Stuff’ Out of the Way
of Relationship With the Holy One, Our True Mission,
and Our True Destiny***

It is amazing that we can cross the threshold of the *korban olah* on our way to intimate communion with the Divine Bridegroom – saying to Him that we are willing to lay our lives down, and pass through the fire, and be totally consumed - only to turn around the next day and find ourselves struggling with the making of *korban minchah*. The making of *korban minchah* is a little different from *korban olah*, and presumes *korban olah* was first made, and made wholeheartedly.

¹⁰ The five basic spiritual needs of every human being who desires to worship the Holy One of Israel, the Creator of Heaven and Earth are described in Leviticus chapters 1 through 5. They are: 1. to make *korban olah*; 2. to make *korban minchah*; 2. to make *korban shalem*; 4. to make *korban chata't*; and 5. to make *korban asham*.

Why do people who claim to be totally devoted to the Holy One so often vehemently reject the Holy One's instructions concerning *stuff* – like what we are and are not to eat, what we are and are not to do with our possessions, and on what we are and are not to focus our attention and expend our labor? The answer is *because we are children of Adam and Chava!* What was the essence of Adam and Chava's temptation and sin? It was the desirability of the fruit [a form of *minchah*] stirred in Adam and Chava a passion that outweighed their commitment to the Holy One's Word and caused them to divert their energy to their own pursuits rather than the Holy One's. They ceased to look upon the multitude of wonderful things the Holy One had given them to eat as gifts, and the great instructions the Holy One had given them as their highest and best destiny.

Let it not be so with us. As new creations with Torah written on our hearts, one with Messiah, let us bring our *minchah* to the fire of the Holy One, trembling with gratitude and reverence. Yeshua said it this way:

Al t'atzru lachem otzarot b'aretz

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth

Asher yochlum sham sas v'rakav

where moth and rust destroy

v'ganavim yach't'ru v'ganavu

and where thieves break in and steal;

aval t'atzru lachem otzarot b'shamayim

but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

ki bimakom asher otzarchem vu sham yihyeh gam levavchem

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[Matthew 6:19-21]

Our Heavenly High Priest stands waiting to assist us. Let us bring to Him and lay before Him all the material 'stuff' we have produced or hope to acquire. Let Him place three fingers in it and remove from us whatever portion He in His wisdom desires. Then let Him sprinkle it with oil and frankincense and salt and toss it on the altar. May it be a sweet savor unto the Holy One – and release the fragrance of worship both on earth and in Heaven. ***Selah!***

The Same Issues Apply to the Kohanim

Meanwhile – alas, we are back at the *Mish'kan* of earth. And here on the orb of this planet we find that the one to whom we are physically presenting our *minchah* – the one appointed to receive our *minchah* on behalf of the Holy One - is not the risen, ascended, glorified Messiah. The one reaching his three fingers into that which we have brought out of worship is but an ordinary man – a man of real flesh

and blood and appetites just like us. The three fingers carving out the portion to be burned on the altar belong not to the Holy One but to our old friend Aharon. Oh, he's all dressed up in a fancy priest's suit. And he's virtually glistening with anointing oil. And every movement of his garments releases the fragrance of sweet incense – but underneath all that ... well ... underneath all that he's still Aharon, isn't he? What does he think he is doing with my *minchah*! Can I trust *him*? After all - isn't this the same guy who took people's gold earrings and used them to fashion an idol which he declared to be the god who brought out of bondage? Wasn't this the guy who made up his own 'feast' and declared it was a feast to the Holy One – when it was *anything but*? Do I really have to present my hard-earned *minchah* to him? Indeed, there is the rub! One of the most intriguing distinctions between the *korban olah* and the *korban minchah* is the fact that, unlike a *korban olah*, which is totally consumed in the fire, most of the *korban minchah* never reaches the altar. As long as the *Mish'kan* stood the largest portion of each *minchah* surrogate brought forth was to be taken charge of by *Aharon and his sons*, and eaten by them as part of the Covenant-sealing meal. For the instructions of the Holy One regarding the *minchah* clearly say:

V'ha-noteret min ha-minchah l'Aharon ul'v'nav

The remainder of the minchah is unto Aharon and his descendants.

K'desh k'dashim me'ishei Adonai

It is the holiest level of holiness among the fire offerings to the Holy One.

[Leviticus 2:4, 10]

It is one thing for us to surrender everything we *have* and *hope to be* to the Holy One. It is, or can be, quite another thing to surrender the fruit of our *labor* [at least, that's the way it looks from our perspective] to *other human beings*. It challenges us right to the core of our competitive natures and suspicious minds to give something earned by the sweat of our brow – to someone who is not in the least accountable to us for what he does with it. But while the *kohanim* are not accountable to us that does not mean they are not accountable to *anyone*. They are accountable *to the Holy One*. The *minchah*, whether it has been burned on the altar or taken by the priest, is *kadesh k'dashim* – holiness of holiness to the Holy One.

It is not theirs to hoard or to delight in or use for selfish reasons any more than it was ours. The Holy One must always be their exceeding great reward as well. *Acquainting ourselves with, aligning our hearts and priorities with, and doing the Holy One's Will* must always remain their ultimate source of pleasure, too. The Holy One's *Wise Counsel* must always remain their sole source of knowledge as well. Heaven help the *kohen* who misappropriates the *minchah* or who appropriates any of the holy things of *B'nei Yisrael* for his own use. How that works its way out, however, is the Holy One's business, and His alone. It is not supposed to be a concern of yours or of mine.

Segue to Passover - A Fresh Introduction to the Potentially Toxic Influence of 'Leaven'

Near the conclusion of today's aliyah we are introduced to a new way of classifying and distinguishing between products containing grain. Not all products containing grain are to be burned on the altar to present a pleasing aroma to the Holy One. One entire classification of grain products – products containing something the Hebrew texts call *chametz*, and our English Bibles call 'leaven' - are never to even touch the altar of holiness.

Kol ha-minchah asher takrivu l'Adonai lo te'aseh chametz

Make none of the baked grain products presented to the Holy One with leaven.

ki chol-se'or v'chol-dvash lo-taktiru mimeinu isheh l'Adonai

This is because you may not burn anything fermented by fire before the Holy One.

Korban reshit takrivu otam l'Adonai

Although approach to the Holy One may be made with such things¹¹,

v'el ha-mizbe'ach lo-ya'alu l're'ach nichoach

they may not be presented by fire on the altar as a pleasing fragrance.

[Leviticus 2:11-12]

What is *chametz* [i.e. leaven] anyway? Why is no *chametz* to be added to any grain presented as a surrogate on our behalf before the Holy One? *Chametz* is a *foreign substance*. It is actually a *fungus*. It is added by man to grain to make its dough rise, thereby changing both its natural shape and altering its natural characteristics. It produces carbon dioxide and alcohol that in turn cause air bubbles to arise in dough, making it appear light and fluffy. Adding *chametz* means introducing *foreign influences*. It means doing things 'our way' – ways that *seem right to man* but which are *different from the Holy One's ways*.

Why do we add *Chametz to dough*? Think about it. *Chametz* adds no nutritional value. It is primarily for appearance. *Chametz* exalts form over substance. Such a product of man's vain imagination has no place at the Holy One's altar. Perhaps that is why we are instructed by the Holy One to *remove every trace of chametz from our homes* [and indeed our lives] for the season of *Pesach/Matzah* that is rapidly approaching. We are especially during this season of beginnings called to focus intently on *who we have been redeemed and created to be in the Holy One* – not on how attractive we look like on the outside. We are to focus on the Holy One and *His ways* – not on human-engineered programs that focus on external appearances and exalt form over substance.

Let's get *real*, Dear Reader. Whatever *chametz* we – or others, through flattery or uninspired counsel - have added to our lives this past year – let us search it out,

¹¹ The first fruit offering of grain is discussed in Leviticus 23:17 and Numbers 28:26.

pluck it up, and cast it aside.

The Rich Young Ruler In Us All

In the days of Yeshua's first advent there was a certain very influential young man who came to the Master and inquired of Him: "***Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?***" It seemed like a straightforward question. And Yeshua's response to this man was straightforward as well. He said ***You know the mitzvot: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.*** Yeshua would, of course, get thrown out of a lot of Christian seminaries for making this response to the 'what shall I do' question, but that is nevertheless exactly what the gospel writer indicates He said.

The young man in question was totally unperturbed. Immediately he responded "***All these things I have kept from my youth.***" How could anyone possibly look into the Face of the Master and make that declaration, I wonder? But Yeshua did not flinch. He listened carefully to what the man told Him, took note of his demeanor and the spirit in which he spoke, and [I suspect] looked deep within the deepest recesses of the man's soul. He then said to the man: ***You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*** We all know what happened next: when the man heard this he *became very sorrowful*, for he was very rich. **Luke 18:18-23.**

Oh, Beloved. What is that growing in your field? What is that stored in your barn? What is that parked in your garage? What is that sitting in your bank? What is that accumulating in your retirement account? What is written on your 'if and when my ship comes in' wish list? What is that you hold in your hand? What are you doing - or dreaming of doing - with the *grain of life*? Are all those things yours? Or are they His? The Holy One knows that one of the primary things that stands between us and communion with our Divine Bridegroom is the material stuff of life we humans tend to hold so dear. That is why He ordained as one of the pathways to intimacy the approach called *korban minchah*.

The brazen altar blazes before us. Our great High Priest is smiling, holding out His nail-scarred Hand, ready to receive? What will you put in those Hands today? And what will be the fragrance emitted when it touches the fire?

Questions For Today's Study

1. In yesterday's aliyah the Holy One began giving instructions concerning how individuals might approach Him as He was enthroned in the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. The first type of surrogate to be used in worship in the context of the *Mish'kan* was the *korban olah* [burnt offering, or "ascending offering"].

[A] What type of ‘offering’ [*i.e.* respectable precious surrogate of approach] is today’s aliyah’s subject?

[B] In Strongs and Gesenius, look up the words the King James Version translates as “meat” [Strong’s #4503, *minchah*] and “offering” [Strong’s #7133, *korban*] as used in today’s *psukim*. Write the Hebrew words so translated and their verb roots, and describe the Hebraic word pictures they present.

[C] If you have any reference material on the various types of *korbanot*, review what those sources say about “meat” or “grain” offerings, and make notes about anything you consider informative for us today.

[D] The identity of the one making *korban minchah* is described as a “*nefesh*” [Strong’s Hebrew word #5315 (*nun, peh, shin*)]. This is in contrast to the one who we were told yesterday made *korban olah – adam*.

2. The “*korban olah*” had to do with the total surrender of ourselves, our hearts, our devotion, and our wills, to God. Read Romans 12:1-2. What about the worshipper you think the “meat offering” symbolizes and/or represents?

[Read **Genesis 4:3, Deuteronomy 8:17-18, Colossians 3:23, Isaiah 26:12, and Psalm 90:17** before you answer. What do those verses tell us?]

3. Approaching the Holy One as He consented to manifest Himself at the *Mishkan* [and as He has promised to manifest Himself in the Heavenly Throne Room of which the *Mish’kan* was merely a picture] requires some specific protocol.

[A] What two things were not to be added to or incorporated in the ‘meat offering’?

[B] What do you think each of these substances represents in the life of a worshipper seeking to approach the Holy One?

[C] What three things were to be added to the *korban minchah* before it went on the fire?

[D] What do you think each of these substances represents in the life of a worshipper seeking to approach the Holy One?

[E] What were the possible ways the ‘*korban minchah*’ could be prepared?

4. With regard to the giving of the *korban minchah*,

[A] List the responsibilities of the individual who brought this type of *korban*;

[B] List the responsibilities of the *kohanim* [priest(s)] with respect to this type of *korban*.

[C] Realizing that Yeshua is our high priest, and that our hearts are our altar, list our responsibilities and Yeshua’s responsibilities in relation to spiritual “*korbanot minchahot*” today.

[D] Pause for a few moments, close your eyes, and present your “*korban minchah*” to Yeshua at the threshold of God’s throne room. Go through the steps

you listed above, for you, and ask the Holy One to show you what is done with your *korban* by Yeshua.

5. In the Haftarah aliyah for today, the Holy One is speaking to His People, scolding them, disciplining them like a father disciplines a child. Let's see what He has to say. The voice you hear is the Holy One's:

***Put me in remembrance;
let us contend together: set forth [your cause], that you may be justified.
Your first father sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against me.
Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary;
and I will make Ya`akov a curse and Yisra'el a reviling.***

[Isaiah 43:26-28]

But the Holy One does not end His fatherly talk with the discipline as His focus. After He has made His point, He goes on to *re-affirm His love* for His People, and His abiding *commitment to the covenant* He has made with them. Their [our] sin has not changed – and will *never* change - His commitment to them [us] one whit, as He makes clear:

***Yet now sh'ma, Ya`akov my servant, and Yisra'el, who I have chosen:
Thus says the Holy One who made you, and formed you from the womb, who will help you:
Don't be afraid, Ya`akov my servant; and you, Yeshurun, whom I have chosen.***

***For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit on your seed and my blessing on your offspring:
and they shall spring up among the grass as willows by the watercourses.***

***One shall say, "I am the Holy One's";
and another shall call [himself] by the name of Ya`akov;
and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Holy One,
and surname [himself] by the name of Yisra'el.***

[Isaiah 44:1-4]

[A] For what transgressions did the Holy One say He would discipline Yisrael?

[B] What type of discipline did the Holy One say He would impose? Was the discipline He promised to serve as a punishment, or as a training lesson with a redemptive purpose?

[C] How does the Holy One say He will revive Yisrael (after the discipline was completed)?

[D] What different things will people of revived Israel testify?

6. This week's readings from the apostolic writings are all from the letter called "Hebrews", which was written by one of Yeshua's apostles to the Messianic Jews of the First Century. Today we focus in on Hebrews 10:8, in which the writer begins a discussion of the verse from Psalm 40 which he quoted in the passage we studied yesterday.

Previously saying, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you didn't desire, neither had pleasure in them"

[Hebrews 10:8]

Before studying this verse, we probably would do well to put it in its proper Biblical context. Here is the entire paragraph of Psalm 40 from which this quote is taken:

*Many, O Holy One, my God, are the wonderful works that you have done,
And your thoughts that are toward us. They can't be set in order to you;
If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*

*Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire. You have opened my ears:
Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required
Then I said, "**Behold, I have come. It is written about me in the book in the scroll.
I delight to do your will, my God. Yes, your Torah is within my heart.**"*

*I have proclaimed glad news of righteousness in the great assembly.
Behold, I will not seal my lips, O Holy One, you know.
I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart.
I have declared your faithfulness and your salvation.
I have not concealed your lovingkindness and your truth from the great assembly.
Don't withhold your tender mercies from me, O Holy One.
Let your lovingkindness and your truth continually preserve me.*

[Psalm 40:5-11]

[A] In Strong's and Gesenius, look up the Hebrew words that our English Bibles translate as "desire" and "pleasure" in this quote. [Note: you will have to go back to the quoted verse from the TaNaKh, Psalm 40:6, for Strong's to route you to the right Hebrew words]

[B] Write the Hebrew words in question in Hebrew consonants, with appropriate vowel points. Search out the verb roots of these words, and write them as well.

[C] Describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around these two Hebrew words, and then explain, in a half-page essay, what the Psalmist means when he said that the Holy One did not "desire" and did not have "pleasure" in *korbanot olahot* [usually translated into English as "burnt offerings"] and *korbanot chattot* [usually translated into English as "sin offerings"].

[D] What was the attitude of the writer of this Psalm towards the Torah [see especially verses 8-11 of the Psalm before answering]?

*May you find your purpose in this life and
in the world to come as you approach His throne.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 106:4[b]-12

*Visit me with your **yeshu`ah**, that I may see the prosperity of your chosen,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory with your inheritance.*

*We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity.
We have done wickedly. Our fathers didn't understand your wonders in Mitzrayim.
They didn't remember the multitude of your lovingkindnesses,
But were rebellious at the sea, even at the Sea of Suf.*

*Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
that he might make his mighty power known.
He rebuked the Sea of Suf also, and it was dried up;
So he led them through the depths, as through a desert.
He saved them from the hand of him who hated them
and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
The waters covered their adversaries. There was not one of them left.
Then they believed his words. They sang his praise.*