



## 5785 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parshat Tetzaveh פרשת תצוה

### Incense of the Divine's Bride

After concluding a lengthy explication of the *mishkan's* vessels and structure, the Torah describes the priestly vestments and *Aharon's* inaugural sacrifices. Significantly, the Torah deliberately waits till the end of our *parsha* to describe one last vessel, the golden *mizbeach*, on which the *ketoret* was burned twice a day. This strange placement for the command to bring *ketoret* connotes special significance.

In fact, the city of *Yerushalayim* is particularly associated with the *ketoret*. When *Hashem* commands *Avraham Avinu* to bring *Yitzchak* as a *korban*, He refers to Jerusalem as *Eretz HaMoriya* (*Bereishit* 22:2). The commentators provide several explanations for this title. *Rashi*, citing *Onkelos*, explains that *Moriya* refers to the ingredients of the incense brought in the *Beit HaMikdash*. Given the fact that so many varied forms of *korbanot* and libations are brought in Jerusalem, it is surprising that *Hashem* would choose the particular service of *ketoret* as a name for the city. What is so special about the *ketoret* in particular that earned its distinction as the namesake for *Eretz HaMoriya*?

Perhaps the key to understanding the unique status of the *ketoret* can be found in the *Gemara Yoma* (39b) that describes the incredibly powerful aroma of the *ketoret*. The scent of the incense could be detected miles away from the holy city. The aroma was so powerfully concentrated in Jerusalem itself that brides getting married in the city did not have to purchase and apply perfumes, כלה שבירושלים אינה צריכה להתקשט מריח קטורת. Clearly, the *Gemara's* seemingly hyperbolic statement is not intended to provide a history lesson in the beautiful and powerful scent of the *ketoret*. Rather, it is revealing that the poignant power of the *ketoret* impacted upon the entire city of *Yerushalayim*.

*Chazal* famously compare *matan Torah* to a *chupah*; *Hashem* took *Klal Yisrael* as His bride under the wedding canopy of *Har Sinai*. The *Ramban* explains that the *mishkan* was intended to serve as the carryover of the *matan Torah* experience. The *mishkan* became a portable, physical expression of our marriage to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Ultimately, *Hashem* desired the *Beit HaMikdash* in Jerusalem to replace the *mishkan* as His bridal canopy. This is why we refer to *Yerushalayim* (and *Klal Yisrael*) as the *kallah* of the Almighty.

Perhaps we have now revealed a deeper dimension of the *Gemara Yoma* cited above. In order to be worthy of a divine rendezvous with her Husband, *Klal Yisrael* must be properly prepared. She is the *kallah* being referenced in the *Gemara*. She is "dressed" beautifully and ready for her marriage. But the filth and taint of sin "sullies" the bride before her *chuppah*. How can she appear before her Beloved with the stench of sin upon her? What will she use to "sweeten" her scent so that she can return to *Hashem*?

The powerful aroma of the *ketoret* comes to her aid (see *Igra d'Kallah* of the *Bnei Yissasschar* to *Parshat Korach*). The *ketoret* possesses the ability to be ממתיק הדינים, to sweeten bitter judgements, and give the *kallah* the final flourish she needs to be worthy of entering the divine *chuppah*. This heavenly "perfume" is



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the ultimate tool of *Klal Yisrael* to become worthy of consummating her marriage with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. How appropriate that the *mizbeach hazahav* and the *ketoret* be the final pieces of the *mishkan's* construction. And how appropriate that the entire city of Jerusalem, the *chuppah* of *Hashem*, be associated with the beautiful scent that escorts the *kallah* to her Beloved.

For the last year and half, *Klal Yisrael* has been experiencing so much pain and disgrace. The heart-rending events of the past few weeks have only made us feel more surrounded by the darkness of דינים, bitter judgements that leave the bride of the Almighty feeling tortured and forlorn. *Yehi ratzon* that we witness the "sweetening of judgements" as our Beloved wipes away the pain and disgrace of His bride and restores her former glory, speedily in our days.





**פרשת תצוה Parshat Tetzaveh על ידי רבי רעוונ שרייר רבני תורה על ירושלים 5785**