

Discourse 20

*“v’Asita Mizbach Miktar Ketoret... -
You shall make an alter to burn incense...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Tetzaveh,
8th of Adar-Rishon, 5727
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹⁴⁵⁶ “You shall make an altar to burn incense.” About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁴⁵⁷ “The verse does not say, ‘upon which incense is burned- *Mitkater BaKetoret*-מִתְקָטֵר בַּקְטוֹרֶת,’ but says, ‘to burn incense- *Miktar Ketoret*-מִקְטֵר קְטוֹרֶת,’ in that the altar would burn the incense.” In other words, “the altar itself would burn the incense without the assistance of fire from below, but through fire from Above.”¹⁴⁵⁸ This is why the [gold] plating of the altar was not tarnished by the fire that was on it,¹⁴⁵⁹ since the fire from Above does not destroy.¹⁴⁶⁰

As it states in Midrash,¹⁴⁶¹ “Moshe wondered about this, since it is impossible for the wood not burn (in that the plating

¹⁴⁵⁶ Exodus 30:1

¹⁴⁵⁷ Midrash Vayikra Rabba 7:5; Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah 3:8

¹⁴⁵⁸ Korban HaEidah to Talmud Yerushalmi ibid.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 27a

¹⁴⁶⁰ See Midrash Shemot Rabba 2:5

¹⁴⁶¹ See Tosefot entitled “*SheEin*-שֶׁאֵין” to Talmud Bavli, Chagigah citing Midrash Tanchuma (and see Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 11); Also see Midrash HaGadol cited in Torah Sheleimah to Exodus ibid. (Section 9*).

of the altar was only the thickness of a gold dinar).¹⁴⁶² The Ever Present One said to him, ‘This is My way with the fire from Above. It is a fire that consumes fire, but does not destroy.’ We therefore must understand the superiority of the fire from Above, in that specifically this [fire] burned the incense.

To explain, the matter of the two fires (the fire from below and the fire from Above) as they are in our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is the matter of arousal from below and arousal from Above.¹⁴⁶³ However, the primary matter of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and Holy Temple (*Mikdash*) is the drawing down brought about specifically through our toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as the verse states,¹⁴⁶⁴ “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell within them.” That is, the dwelling of the Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the *Shechinah*, (“I will dwell-v’*Shachanti*-ושכנתי”) specifically comes through our toil, “**They shall make-v’*Asoo*-ועשו** a Sanctuary for Me.”

The same is so of the service of the sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*), which was the primary mode of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה in the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and Holy Temple (*Mikdash*), the matter of which is specifically toil from below. (This is as explained by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in the discourses of the Hilulah.)¹⁴⁶⁵

¹⁴⁶² Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 27a ibid.

¹⁴⁶³ See Likkutei Torah, Naso 29a; Torat Chayim, Terumah 444b (305c in the new edition).

¹⁴⁶⁴ Exodus 25:8

¹⁴⁶⁵ *Hemshech* “*Bati LeGani*” 5710, Ch. 2.

This is as the verse states,¹⁴⁶⁶ “A pleasing aroma (*Rei’ach Nicho’ach*-ריח נִיחֹחַ),” about which our sages, of blessed memory, said,¹⁴⁶⁷ “It brings satisfaction of spirit (*Nachat Ru’ach*-נַחַת רוּחַ) before Me that I spoke, and My will was done.” In other words, the satisfaction of spirit Above is brought about because “My will was done” specifically through our toil below. This being so, it is not understood what the greatness of “to burn incense” (*Miktar Ketoret*-מִקְטָר קְטוֹרֶת) is, in that [the altar would burn the incense] in which the matter is specifically fire from Above.

2.

The explanation is that Zohar states,¹⁴⁶⁸ “The menorah had seven flames, (which is the matter of) [the verse],¹⁴⁶⁹ ‘the seven maidens that were appropriate to present to her from the king’s palace’ etc. From there on [is the verse], ‘You shall make an altar to burn incense.’” In other words, the seven lights (*Neirot*-נֵרוֹת) of the Menorah are the aspect of the seven maidens (*Ne’arot*-נְעָרוֹת), this being the aspect of arousal from Above drawn down through arousal from below.

This is the matter of the “seven maidens that were appropriate to present to her from the king’s palace.” In other words, even though they came from the king’s palace (the arousal from Above), nonetheless, they were “appropriate to

¹⁴⁶⁶ Leviticus 1:9; Numbers 28:8 and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Torat Kohanim (cited in Rashi) to Leviticus 1:9 *ibid.*; Sifrei (cited in Rashi) to Numbers 28:8 *ibid.*, and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Zohar III 254b and on, cited in Ohr HaTorah, Tetzaveh p. 1,759

¹⁴⁶⁹ Esther 2:9

present to her” (because of the arousal from below). In contrast, “the altar to burn incense” (*Miktar Ketoret*-מקטר קטורת) is the aspect of arousal from Above that comes in and of itself, in that the arousal from below does not reach there.

The explanation is that the two altars, the outer altar and the inner altar, as they are in our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, are the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the heart and the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the heart.¹⁴⁷⁰ This is as we say,¹⁴⁷¹ “Unify our hearts” (in which the word “hearts-*Levaveinu*-לבבנו” is spelled with two letters *Beit*-ב),¹⁴⁷² indicating that there must be the union of the two hearts, the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the heart and the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the heart. The primary perfection in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is the toil that stems from the aspect of the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the heart, brought about through a drawing down that specifically is an arousal from Above.

The explanation is that the ultimate purpose of our toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is to affect the union of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*). This is why before [fulfilling] every *mitzvah* we recite, “For the sake of unifying the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*).”¹⁴⁷³ The perfection of this union (*Yichud*) (which is in the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the heart) is brought about through drawing down from Above in a way of arousal from Above.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Likkutei Torah ibid.; Torat Chayim ibid, p. 449b and on (309a and on).

¹⁴⁷¹ In the blessings of the *Shema* recital.

¹⁴⁷² See Rashi to Deuteronomy 6:5; Mishnah Brachot 9:5; Talmud Bavli, Brachot 54a

¹⁴⁷³ Likkutei Torah ibid.; Torat Chayim ibid. p. 449b and on (309a and on).

3.

However, this must be understood. For, at first glance, based on the statement in Zohar, on the Torah portion of Terumah,¹⁴⁷⁴ “[From the day that there was a cessation of that river] the Gardener does not enter into the garden etc.,” meaning that during the time of the exile, the union (*Yichud*) is not present, this seems to contradict the statement above, that the fulfillment of every *mitzvah* causes the union (*Yichud*) of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*). Now, to understand this, we must preface with the discourse of his honorable holiness, the Tzemach Tzeddek, entitled “*Lehavin Mah SheKatuv b’Zohar Terumah* etc.”¹⁴⁷⁵ He states as follows:¹⁴⁷⁶

4.

To elucidate, this discourse also explains the matter of the 7th day of Adar (which in a leap year, is in the first month of Adar),¹⁴⁷⁷ and why the passing of our teacher Moshe, peace be upon him, is established as a fast day on the 7th day of Adar. [This is so, even though on the 7th of Adar there also is a matter of joy. This is as we find in Talmud,¹⁴⁷⁸ “[If one said], ‘I am hereby like Moshe was on the seventh day of Adar,’ what [is

¹⁴⁷⁴ Zohar II 167a

¹⁴⁷⁵ Subsequently printed in Biurei HaZohar of the Tzemach Tzeddek, Vol. 2, p. 818 and on; Also see Torat Menachem, Vol. 25 p. 24 and on.

¹⁴⁷⁶ The continuation of the discourse is missing at this juncture.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Magen Avraham to Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 580 S”K 8; Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 16, p. 342.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Talmud Bavli, Nazir 14a and Tosefot entitled “v’*Amar*” there.

the law (*Halachah*) vis-à-vis his status as a Nazirite]? For, on the day of Moshe's birth, they celebrated with great joy, but on the day of his death, because of their anguish many likely took the oath [of a Nazirite] etc. There thus is a question as to what his intention was in stating, "I am hereby like Moshe was on the seventh day of Adar," referring to [Moshe] on the day of his death, in which case, he accepts being a Nazirite upon himself? Or is he referring to the day of Moshe's birth and is thus accepting joy upon himself?"

Similarly, it states in Talmud,¹⁴⁷⁹ "Once the lot fell on the month of Adar, he (Haman) greatly rejoiced. For, he said to himself, 'The lot has fallen for me in the month that Moshe died.' However, he did not know that [not only] did Moshe die on the seventh day of Adar, but he also was born on the seventh day of Adar." Rashi there explains, "The birth is worthy of atoning for the death."¹⁴⁸⁰ However, even so, the law in Shulchan Aruch is that the seventh of Adar, which marks the day of his passing, is a day of fasting.] In contrast, when it comes to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the day of his passing is a day of celebration (Hilulah).

5.

This is also the meaning of the verse,¹⁴⁸¹ "And you shall command-v'Atah Tetzaveh-וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה etc." To explain, the word "And you-v'Atah-וְאַתָּה" is a composite of "Vav Atah-וְ

¹⁴⁷⁹ Talmud Bavli, Megillah 13b

¹⁴⁸⁰ This is elucidated in Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 26 p. 1 and on.

¹⁴⁸¹ Exodus 27:20

אתה.” The word “You-*Atah*-אתה” refers to the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut*.¹⁴⁸² When it states, “And you-*v’Atah*-ואתה” (with the addition of the *Vav*-ו-6), this refers to the matter of drawing down the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, into Kingship-*Malchut*.¹⁴⁸³

This is the meaning of “And you shall command-*v’Atah Tetzaveh*-ואתה תצוה,” in which [the word “command-*Tetzaveh*-תצוה”] is of the same root as “to connect-*Tzavta*-צוותה” and bond,¹⁴⁸⁴ this being the matter of the union (*Yichud*) of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukva*, which is the union (*Yichud*) of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*).

The primary drawing down of this union (*Yichud*) is in the inner altar, which is the aspect of the innerness (*Pnimityut*) of the heart. This is why the commandment about the golden altar is at the conclusion of the Torah portion of “And you shall command-*v’Atah Tetzaveh*-ואתה תצוה.” This because the perfection of the connection (*Tzavta*-צוותה) and bonding, that is,

¹⁴⁸² [See Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 2 that “the word ‘You-*Atah*-אתה’ [in the second person] is the aspect of the letters of the alphabet from *Alef*-א to *Tav*-ת, whereas the *Hey*-ה represents the five places in the mouth that the letters issue from, which are the source of the letters,” and as known (from the introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 17a-b), “Kingship-*Malchut* is the mouth.” It also is noteworthy that the 22 letters from *Alef*-א to *Tav*-ת, ש"ח, ק"ר ש"ח, ט"י כ"ל מ"ן ס"ע פ"צ ק"ר ש"ח, when added together, equal 1,495, and with the cycling of the *Eleph*-א"ל-1000 back to *Aleph*-א"ל-1, they equal Kingship-*Malchut*-ת-מלכו-496, which has same numerical value as “command-*Tetzav*-תצו,” with the *Hey*-ה (of *Tetzaveh*-תצוה) hinting at the five places in the mouth that the letters issue from (or the five primary vowels). (Also see Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as HaShem Is One, Volume 3 (The Letters of Creation, Part 2), and Vol. 4 (The Vowels of Creation).]

¹⁴⁸³ Also see Ohr HaTorah, Tetzaveh p. 1,551; Also see the end of the discourse entitled “*v’Atah Tetzaveh*” in *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 2, p. 891 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5701 p. 139 and on.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Torah Ohr, Tetzaveh 82a

the union (*Yichud*) of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*), is upon the inner altar.

This union (*Yichud*) on the inner altar stems from the aspect of the fire from Above, which is the matter of the arousal from Above, as mentioned above. This then, is why the commandment about the inner altar comes after the commandment about the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and all its implements.¹⁴⁸⁵

This is because the ultimate purpose of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), that “I will dwell within them,” comes about through drawing down the aspect of arousal from Above, the fire from Above, this being the matter of the altar “to burn incense” (*Miktar Ketoret*-מִקְטָר קְטוֹרֶת).

However, it first was necessary to command about all the other implements of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), this being the aspect of arousal from below, and specifically through the arousal from below, with the arousal from above being drawn down through it, there then is the aspect of the arousal from Above, to which the arousal from below does not reach,¹⁴⁸⁶ since the Holy One, blessed is He, only dwells in a place that is perfect.¹⁴⁸⁷

This is also why it was necessary to bring coals from the outer altar to the inner altar.¹⁴⁸⁸ This is because the drawing

¹⁴⁸⁵ Also see Ramban (and the other commentators) to the verse; Likkutei Sichot Vol. 1, p. 171 and on; Also see the Sichah talk of Shabbat Parshat Tetzaveh 5752, Ch. 2 and on (Hitva'aduyot 5752, Vol. 2, p. 318 and on).

¹⁴⁸⁶ See Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 24a

¹⁴⁸⁷ See Zohar III 90b

¹⁴⁸⁸ See Talmud Bavli, Tamid 33a; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Temidin uMusafin 3:7; Torat Chayim, Terumah ibid. 305c; Also see *Hemshech* 5666 p. 144; Reshimat HaMenorah p. 100-101.

down must first be through the arousal from below, and specifically through this, there subsequently can be the drawing down of the arousal from above, which transcends the light drawn down through the arousal from below, this drawing being the ultimate perfection in the matter of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), which is “I will dwell within them-*v’Shachanti b’Tocham*-ושכנתי בתוכם.”