

Discourse 19

*“Ki Tisa... -
When you take a census...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Ki Tisa,
16th of Adar, 5728¹²²³
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

Ki Tisa etc. This Torah portion¹²²⁴ explains the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He in the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and the Holy Temple (*Mikdash*), which [also] is called the “Tabernacle-*Mishkan*-משכן,”¹²²⁵ and the matter of the work of the incense (*Ketoret*), which was one of the primary services performed in the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*). Although the preceding Torah portion, the portion of Tetzaveh,¹²²⁶ also discusses the matter of the incense (*Ketoret*), as well as in the coming Torah portion of Vayakhel,¹²²⁷ there it only is discussed generally, whereas in this Torah portion it is explained in detail, such as the preparations for it, what the incense is made of, as well as its greatness, the prohibitions connected with it and their severity to the point of the opposite of life for those who transgress them.

¹²²³ The original discourse was edited by the Rebbe.

¹²²⁴ [Exodus] 30:34 and on

¹²²⁵ Eruvin 2a

¹²²⁶ [Exodus] 30:7 and on

¹²²⁷ [Exodus] 37:29

Even this matter of the opposite of life is explained specifically in this Torah portion, since it is here that the severity of the matter is explained. Although the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) also have a number of prohibitions associated with them, such as non-sacrificial animals [slaughtered] in the Temple courtyard, or sanctified animals slaughtered outside [the Temple courtyard] etc., it does not reach the severity of the incense (*Ketoret*) to the extent that it causes the opposite of life to one who prepares its recipe [incorrectly].

Now, the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) and the work of the incense (*Ketoret*) are the [forms of] service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*). This is as explained in the discourse of the day of the Hilulah, that the primary mode of service in the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and the Holy Temple (*Mikdash*) is the matter of the service of the sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*) (which also includes the work of the incense (*Ketoret*)). Therefore, the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) was [built] specifically of acacia-wood (*Atzei Shittim*-עצי שטים) (as explained there), and through this the [matter of] "I shall dwell within them" is caused

To explain, the general matter of the sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*-קרבנות) is the matter of bringing all the powers [of the soul] close (*Kiruv*-קירוב),¹²²⁸ to the point of [affecting] the closeness of "the mystery of the sacrifices ascends to the mystery of the Unlimited One (*Ein Sof*)."¹²²⁹ However, there is a difference between regular sacrifices (*Korbanot*) and the work of the incense (*Ketoret*).

¹²²⁸ Sefer HaBahir, Section 46

¹²²⁹ Zohar II 239a; Zohar III 26b

This is because the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) are called “eating,” as the verse states,¹²³⁰ “My offering, My food for My fires etc.” This is why the Jewish people are called],¹²³¹ “My beloved-*Ra’ayati*-רעיתי,” which also means “my shepherd-*Ra’ayati*-רעיתי,” meaning, “my benefactor-*Parnasati*-פרנסתי in [offering] the two daily offerings (*Temidin*) etc.” This is as stated in Midrash,¹²³² “The Jewish people provide sustenance (*Parnassah*) to their Father in Heaven.” In contrast, the work of the incense (*Ketoret*) is the matter of scent (*Rei’ach*).

Now, even though due to the matter of inter-inclusion in holiness, the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) also have the matter of scent, as the verse states,¹²³³ “A pleasing aroma to *HaShem*-יהוה,” nonetheless the primary matter of the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) is the matter of “eating.” It is for this reason that the place where we differentiate between the right and left nostrils of the nose is specifically in regard to the incense (*Ketoret*). This is because it specifically is in the incense (*Ketoret*) that its primary matter is scent (*Rei’ach*).

This is why it specifically is in the power of the incense (*Ketoret*) to transform the side opposite holiness. This is because the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) must specifically be from “that which is permitted in your mouth.” In contrast, in the incense there is also the matter of the “myrrh-*Mor*-מור,” which is the matter of the side opposite holiness. This is as the Alter

¹²³⁰ [Numbers] Pinchas 28:2

¹²³¹ Song of Songs 1:9

¹²³² Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabba to Song of Songs ibid.; Zohar III 7b

¹²³³ Ateret Rosh 36b; Discourse entitled “*Vayarach HaShem et Rei’ach HaNicho’ach*” 5674 and on (*Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1 p. 436 and on); Zohar III 130b; 289a

Rebbe explains¹²³⁴ about [the verse], “six months with oil of myrrh-*Mor*-מור,” and that the name “Mordechai-מרדכי” means “flowing myrrh-*Mira Dachya*-מירא דכיא.” It is not just that the “myrrh-*Mor*-מור” is from the side opposite holiness, but each of the ingredients of the incense (*Ketoret*) is connected to the matter of the side opposite holiness.

This is because in the incense there specifically were eleven ingredients (and if one was missing etc.) In other words, each of the ingredients of the incense (*Ketoret*) is one of the eleven, and eleven is a matter of the side opposite holiness, which is not (like the side of holiness, in which it is) “ten and not eleven.”

Moreover, these eleven ingredients correspond to the chieftains of Esav. This being so, each one of the eleven ingredients is connected to the matter of the side opposite holiness. That is, the matter of the incense (*Ketoret*) is to transform the side opposite holiness into holiness, and the empowerment for this is because the incense (*Ketoret*) is the matter of scent (*Rei'ach*) which reaches even higher than the sacrifices (*Korbanot*).

Now, the superiority of scent (*Rei'ach*) is that it reaches the essential self of the soul. This is why it is by the power of scent, and specifically a potent scent, that an arousal from sleep is caused. This is specifically through the power of scent, rather than through the power of eating. Actually, the opposite is true, that eating induces sleep. This is why it states in Tractate Yoma¹²³⁵ that the High Priest had to minimize his eating on the

¹²³⁴ In Torah Ohr, Drushei Purim (92a; 99a)

¹²³⁵ 18a

eve before Yom HaKippurim, being that eating induces sleep. In contrast, because it reaches the essential self of the soul, scent awakens one from sleep. This is why the service of the High Priest on Yom HaKippurim, the singular day of the year, was specifically with the incense (*Ketoret*), which is the matter of scent.

This is similar to how it is in man below, that scent has the power to awaken the essential self of the soul. The same was so in the Holy Temple, that the service with scent took place in the Holy of Holies. Even though the high priest (*Kohen Gadol*) would also enter there with the blood of the sacrifices, nonetheless, the primary service in the Holy of Holies was with the incense (*Ketoret*).

The novelty of the work of the incense of Yom HaKippurim is that it takes place in the Holy of Holies, and because of the greatness of the incense (*Ketoret*), therefore “no person shall be in the tent of meeting etc.,” and this is so even throughout the whole year. (In Chassidus, this matter is explained about Yom HaKippurim¹²³⁶ - but it likewise is so throughout the whole year¹²³⁷ because of the greatness of the incense (*Ketoret*).) This is because the matter of scent reaches the essential self of the soul.

Now, just as physically, it specifically is in the power of scent to rouse one from sleep, the same is so spiritually, that in order to be roused from sleep, this is specifically brought about through scent (*Rei'ach*).

¹²³⁶ Ohr HaTorah, Yom HaKippurim, discourse entitled “v’Khol Adam” (p. 1,555 and on).

¹²³⁷ Yoma 44a

Now, the matter of sleep was explained in the Purim discourse¹²³⁸ on the verse,¹²³⁹ “I am asleep, but my heart is awake; the voice of my Beloved knocks etc.” In other words, even when the Ingathering of the souls of Israel (*Kneset Yisroel*) is asleep in exile, nevertheless, since “my heart is awake,” meaning that the singular-*Yechidah* essence of the soul is in a state of wholeness and is awake for each and every Jew, therefore, “the voice of my Beloved knocks; Open to Me.”

That is, in order for there to be [the aspects of] “My sister-*Achotee*-אחותי,” “My beloved-*Ra’ayatee*-רעיתי,” “My dove-*Yonatee*-יונתי,” and “My pure one-*Tamatee*-תמתי,” (and in the above-mentioned discourse it explained this verse, “I am asleep etc.,” and the explanation of the continuing verse, “I have taken off my robe etc.,” follows after [the verse], “The voice of my Beloved knocks”) that through this the Ingathering of the souls of Israel (*Kneset Yisroel*) responds, “I have taken off my robe, how can I don it?”

In their writings on Song of Songs, the Rebbe Maharash and the Tzemach Tzedek bring (on the verse,¹²⁴⁰ “My Beloved sent His hand etc.”) that it states in Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah on the verse, “I have taken off my robe etc.,” that “this refers to the Priestly garments and Royal garments that were removed from them during exile.” However, at first glance, the connection to the Priestly garments etc., is not understood in relation to [what is being explained] here.

¹²³⁸ In the [prior] discourse [of this year, 5728] entitled “*Balayla HaHoo*” [Discourse 18] Ch. 2 and on (Sefer HaMaamarim 5728 p. 132 and on).

¹²³⁹ Song of Songs 5:2

¹²⁴⁰ [Song of Songs ibid. 5:]4

They explain that since “I am asleep – in exile” and “the voice of my Beloved knocks” to awaken from sleep, this being so, the response to this is “I have taken off my robe,” meaning that she lacks the Priestly garments etc. Therefore, it is not possible for there to be the service of the sacrificial offerings (*Korbanot*) which is called “a pleasing aroma to *HaShem*-יהוה.”

This is especially so in regard to the work of the incense (*Ketoret*) which is the matter of scent (*Rei'ach*), and it is scent that awakens from sleep. However, since “I have taken off my Priestly garments,” and there is no scent of the sacrifices or of the incense, this being so, “how can I don it” to awaken the aspects of “My sister-*Achotee*-אהותי” and “My beloved-*Ra'ayati*-רעייתי” etc.

About this the Holy Spirit (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*) responds in the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, “I have washed My feet, how can I soil them?” To explain, the Holy Temple is called¹²⁴¹ “the footstool” of the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Holy Temple is the place where His Indwelling Presence (*Shechinah*) rests, and [yet] it states,¹²⁴² “Behold, the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain You; surely not this house,” this being a sustained question. Thus, after having “washed My feet,” in that “I have washed Myself of manifesting in the Holy Temple,” therefore, “how can I etc.”¹²⁴³

Now, even though during the time of the exile there also is the matter of the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) in the prayers that

¹²⁴¹ Chronicles I 28:2

¹²⁴² Kings I 8:27

¹²⁴³ [See the discourse entitled “*BaLaylah HaHoo* – That night, the king’s sleep was disturbed” 5720, Discourse 13, Ch. 8.]

were established corresponding to the sacrifices,¹²⁴⁴ and similarly, there also is presently the matter of the incense (*Ketoret*), this being the matter of the afternoon Minchah prayer, which is called “the Minchah-offering of the incense (*Ketoret*),” and as explained in the discourses that elaborate on the superiority of the Minchah prayer over the other prayers, and even Eliyahu was only answered in the Minchah prayer¹²⁴⁵ as stated in the Haftorah of this week’s Torah portion,¹²⁴⁶ nonetheless, the drawing down brought about through prayer is only in the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the worlds, and as known, the drawing down must also be in the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the worlds, as explained about the matter of Torah study, that they must specifically be “expressed in the mouth,”¹²⁴⁷ as explained at length by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya.¹²⁴⁸

The same is so of the *mitzvot*, that there specifically must be the actual deed of the *mitzvot*. This is to such an extent that the general matter of Torah and *mitzvot* is specifically below in this world, in which “you descended to Egypt.”¹²⁴⁹ In contrast, when it comes to the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) the revelation is drawn down even in the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the worlds, whereas through the prayers that were established in place of the sacrifices, the drawing down is only in the innerness (*Pnimiyut*) of the worlds, and since it is through the *mitzvot* that the drawing down is in the externality (*Chitzoniyut*)

¹²⁴⁴ Brachot 26b

¹²⁴⁵ Brachot 6b

¹²⁴⁶ Kings I 18:36

¹²⁴⁷ Eruvin 54a

¹²⁴⁸ Ch. 37

¹²⁴⁹ Shabbat 88b

of the worlds, it is about this that the Ingathering of the souls of Israel (*Knesset Yisroel*) states, “I have taken off my robe etc.”

About this the verse continues, “My Beloved sent His hand through the hole.” In other words, even though the Holy Spirit (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*) responds in the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, “I have washed My feet, how can I etc.,” nevertheless, because of the matter of “My Beloved sent His hand through the hole,” in which the word “My Beloved-*Dodi*-דודי” refers to the essential love of the Holy One, blessed is He, for the souls of the Jewish people (as the Alter Rebbe explains in the discourse on the verse, “I arose to let My Beloved in,” and as explained in the Sichah talk of the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul is in Eden).¹²⁵⁰

It is due to the essential love that “My Beloved sent His hand through the hole.” The word “hole-*Chor*-חור” is of the same root as “white-*Chur*-חור, fine cotton,” and is also of the same root as “engraved-*Charut*-חרות.” Through this there is caused to be the [matter of] “Open to Me,” and after the “Open to Me,” the four levels of “My sister-*Achotee*-אחותי,” “My beloved-*Ra'ayatee*-רעייתי,” “My dove-*Yonatee*-יונתי,” and “My pure one-*Tamatee*-תמתי,” which are both the four levels in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with love, in that “there is no labor like the labor of love,”¹²⁵¹ as well as in the service of Him through the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*.

¹²⁵⁰ Sefer HaSichot, Torat Shalom of Simchat Torah 5666 – transcribed by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law the Rebbe (p. 59 and on).

¹²⁵¹ See Zohar II 55b; Zohar III 267a; Likkutei Torah, Shlach 42c

This is because these four levels correspond to the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה,¹²⁵² through which "the Jews had light, and joy, and gladness, and honor."¹²⁵³ It can be suggested that the four matters of "light, and joy etc.," correspond to the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

That is, "'light-*Orah*-אור" refers to Torah,¹²⁵⁴ as the verse states,¹²⁵⁵ "A *mitzvah* is a flame and Torah is light," this being the matter of the *Sefirah* of Wisdom-*Chochmah*.

"'Joy-*Simchah*-שמחה" refers to the festivals of joy (*Mo'adim L'Simchah*),¹²⁵⁶ which is the matter of the *Sefirah* of Understanding-*Binah*.

"'Gladness-*Sasson*-ששון" refers to the circumcision (*Milah*),¹²⁵⁷ which is the matter of the *Sefirah* of Foundation-*Yesod*, and is the primary aspect of *Zeir Anpin*.

"'Honor-*Yikar*-יקר" refers to Tefillin,¹²⁵⁸ which are the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut*, as explained at the end of Shaarei Or, ¹²⁵⁹ and as she is in her root in the Essential Self of the Unlimited One, blessed is He. This is also the meaning of the statement in Zohar Chadash,¹²⁶⁰ that the Tefillin are the likeness of the signet of the Supernal King, the "likeness" and "signet" being the matter of the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut*.

¹²⁵² As explained in Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim (34a and on) and in the discourse of the Rebbe Maharash of the year 5628 (p. 82 and on).

¹²⁵³ Esther 8:16

¹²⁵⁴ Megillah 16b

¹²⁵⁵ Proverbs 6:23

¹²⁵⁶ Megillah 16b *ibid*.

¹²⁵⁷ Megillah 16b *ibid*.

¹²⁵⁸ Megillah 16b *ibid*.

¹²⁵⁹ 48b and on.

¹²⁶⁰ Shir HaShirim 79b

In other words, it is through the [aspect of] “Open to Me” that there is a drawing down of the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה in the service of Him as well as the matter of “light, and joy etc.”

This is also why the verse states, “the **Jews-Yehudim-יהודים** had light etc.” This is as stated in Talmud,¹²⁶¹ “Whosoever repudiates idolatry is called a ‘Jew-Yehudi-יהודי.’” In other words, there first is the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), with which they stood steadfastly in the days of Purim, and this is the matter of “Open to Me,” “like the opening of the tip of a needle,” this being the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*). Then afterwards there are the four levels of “light and joy and gladness and honor.”

This is also the meaning of the verse,¹²⁶² “There was a Jewish (*Yehudi*-יהודי) man in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordechai.” [About Mordechai it states],¹²⁶³ “Where is Mordechai-מרדכי hinted in the Torah? As it is written,¹²⁶⁴ ‘flowing myrrh-*Mor Dror*-מר דרור,’ which Targum translates as ‘*Mira Dachya*-מירא דכיא.’”

As explained in Torah Ohr,¹²⁶⁵ the designation “Jew-Yehudi-יהודי” refers to the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), as explained before. This is because the word “Jew-Yehudi-יהודי” is of the same root as “submission-*Hoda'ah*-הודאה,” which transcends reason and intellect, and this is what caused the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in them all,

¹²⁶¹ Megillah 13a

¹²⁶² Esther 2:5

¹²⁶³ Chullin 139b

¹²⁶⁴ Exodus 30:23

¹²⁶⁵ Megillat Esther 90d

in that they all are specifically called “Jews-*Yehudim*-יהודים,” and as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, this is the opposite of their previous state and standing when they prostrated to the statue, as related in Talmud.¹²⁶⁶ From this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) there subsequently is a drawing down in the four letters of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, [and] “light, and joy, and gladness etc.,” until there is “light, and joy, and gladness, and honor” below ten handsbreadths, as in the simple literal meaning of the verse.

¹²⁶⁶ Megillah 12a; Tosefot [entitled] “*Shelo*-שלא” in Avodah Zarah 3a