
THE WEISS EDITION

תצוה

Tetzaveh



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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

תצוה

Tetzaveh

כח:לה | 28:35

וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְפָנַי ה' וּבְיִצְאָתוֹ וְלֹא יָמוּת

And its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy before G-d and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

Sounds from a Distance

The hem of the Kohen Gadol's robe was adorned with golden bells that chimed as he moved about the Mishkan. The sound of these bells was of such significance that the Kohen Gadol's very life depended on it: "Its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy... so that he shall not die."

What did the bells signify?

A person who senses his utter nothingness before G-d and serves Him with perfect humility can be aptly described as serving G-d with "silence"—a virtue and ideal to aspire to in the service of G-d.¹

But what about the person who feels distant from G-d,

1. See I Melachim 19:11–12.

whose passions are unholy, or whose very sense of himself as an independent being separated from the G-dly energy that animates him creates distance between himself and G-d? Like a drowning man facing the horror of imminent death, the “distant” Jew kicks and screams, trying to escape his current state of detachment from G-d—the Source of all life. This Jew’s search for G-d is noisy and tumultuous.

The ringing of the bells reminded the Kohen Gadol that he was to represent *all* elements of Bnei Yisrael in his service, including those whose relationship with G-d is not yet at the level of perfect “silence.” By wearing the chiming bells on the lowermost hem of his robe, the Kohen Gadol symbolically “carries with him” even the furthest members of the Jewish community—those who relate to G-d not in silence, but with the thunderous rush of their scramble to return.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 338–339*

 28:39 | כח:לט

וְאַבְנֵיט תַעֲשֶׂה מֵעֵשֶׂה רִקָּם

And you shall make a sash of embroidery.

Fasten Your Avnet

Each of the Kohanim's splendid garments adorned a specific part of their bodies. Each of the additional garments and ornaments worn by the Kohen Gadol served a defined purpose: the *choshen* was made of twelve stones corresponding to the Twelve Tribes, the *tzitz* atoned for sacrifices brought in a state of impurity, and so on.

The exception is the *avnet*, the sash or belt, which doesn't seem to have served any specific purpose. The other garments did not actually require a belt to hold them in place, and even the garments which might have benefited from a belt certainly did not need a 32-cubit long belt, which required the Kohen to wrap it around himself repeatedly!²

The purpose of the *avnet* is simply to express the Kohen's "readiness" to serve before G-d (unlike the other garments, which are each associated with a particular mode and theme of Divine service, corresponding to a specific part of the body). This is akin to the Talmudic directive to wear a belt when praying,³ in fulfillment of the words of Amos, "Prepare yourself to greet your G-d, O Israel,"⁴ for girding your body signifies that you have completed the necessary preparations and are now mentally ready to stand before and serve the King of all kings.

2. See Mishneh Torah, Hil. Klei Hamikdash 8:19.

3. Shabbos 10a.

4. Amos 4:12.

In light of that, the *avnet*—more so than the other garments—represents the general sense of submission to G-d with which the Kohanim served in the Mishkan. Accordingly, we can understand why the *avnet* was so long, requiring the Kohen to wrap it around himself repeatedly. This symbolized the Kohen's absolute dedication to G-d: he girded himself not once, but again and again, until his sense of humble devotion before G-d was perfect and complete.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 36, pp. 155-159

 30:1 | א:ל

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטֹרֶת קֹטֶרֶת

You shall make an altar for burning incense.

The Altar of Anonymity

The Inner Mizbe'ach, the golden altar for incense that stood in the sanctuary of the Mishkan, is described at the conclusion of Parshas Tetzaveh. Its placement here is somewhat peculiar, considering that the construction of the Mishkan as well as the other holy vessels found in the sanctuary are described in the previous Parshah.

Another thing that stands out about this Mizbe'ach is that unlike the altar for animal offerings which stood in the courtyard, the Mizbe'ach for burning incense stood in the Sanctuary, hidden from the public eye. In fact, no one other than the Kohen offering the incense that day could be present in the Sanctuary or near its entrance when the incense was offered.⁵ Moreover, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi, even the angels could not be present in the Mishkan at that time!⁶

The offering of incense in the privacy and seclusion of the Sanctuary represents the good deeds we do “out of sight” of others—without publicity and fanfare. By describing the incense altar only *after* the commands regarding the Mishkan's structure and contents, and *after* describing the Kohanim's uniforms and inauguration, the Torah indicates that the offering of incense on this Mizbe'ach represents the ultimate form of Divine service performed in the Mishkan. The height

5. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Temidim Umusafim 3:3.

6. Talmud Yerushalmi, Yoma 5:2.

of Torah and mitzvah observance (and particularly charity) is when one merits that only he and G-d are aware of his great and many achievements.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 171-172*

 ל:ט | 30:9

לֹא תַעֲלוּ עָלָיו קְטֹרֶת זָרָה וְעֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְיִסֵּךְ לֹא תִסְכּוּ עָלָיו

You shall not offer upon it any other incense, burnt-offering or flour-offering, and you shall pour no libation upon it.

Don't Sacrifice Your Heart

The Inner Mizbe'ach, the golden altar that stood in the sanctuary of the Mishkan, was used exclusively for offering *ketores*—incense. All other sacrifices, such as animal and grain offerings, were brought only on the Outer Mizbe'ach, the altar which stood in the courtyard.

These two altars, and their unique offerings, are likewise to be found in the spiritual Mishkan that we must each create within our lives.

The animal and grain offerings on the altar represent a Jew's efforts to elevate the mundane and physical aspects of life by infusing them with G-dly purpose. The incense offering, on the other hand, is more soul-centric,⁷ and therefore symbolic not of elevating the mundane, but of cultivating a more profound spiritual relationship with G-d. Hence the word *ketores*, קְטֹרֶת, akin to the Aramaic word קְטַר, “knot,” alluding to the *internal* bond with G-d that a Jew nurtures within himself through holy and spiritual pursuits, such as the study of Torah, prayer, etc.

That is why *ketores* alone may be offered on the Inner Mizbe'ach.

7. See Talmud, Berachos 43b.

Chassidus explains that the Inner Mizbe'ach represents the "inner heart"—a sublime delight and profound sense of attachment that transcends the "outer heart"—the passion represented by the Outer Mizbe'ach.

The prohibition of offering the animal and grain sacrifices on the Inner Mizbe'ach teaches us that our true delight should never lie in mundane and material pursuits, even if we are directing them toward a higher goal. *Ketores*, however, is to be offered specifically on the Inner Mizbe'ach, symbolizing that endeavors that are exclusively holy must be pursued with total devotion and ecstasy.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, pp. 185–187



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