


CHABAD

 RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

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 Sedra Tetzaveh


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THE PRIVATE DIMENSION

A CENTRAL FOCUS OF JEWISH CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH THE AGES IS the Temple in Jerusalem, the point where the world and G-d meet almost tangibly. The Torah describes in detail the prototype of the Temple, the portable Sanctuary built by Moses and the Jewish people in the Sinai desert.

Last week's Sedra described how the Sanctuary should be built. It depicted the Courtyard, with the Copper Altar for offerings. Then, in the west, the actual inner Sanctuary, with walls of cedar wood overlaid with gold and a roof formed of delicate tapestry. Last week's Sedra also described most of the sacred objects which were to be placed in the inner Sanctuary: the Golden Ark, containing the Tablets of the Law; the Golden Table; the seven branched Golden Menorah oil lamp. However, one important object was left out, as we shall see.

This week's Sedra¹ gives the details concerning the garments of the Priests, the officiants in the Sanctuary: Aaron and his sons. It then describes how the Sanctuary and the Priests themselves should be sanctified with anointing oil, and how the services in the Sanctuary should begin.



Dedicated by Mrs Tzipora Sufrin ח' , to the memory and merit of her father k"z ihætk rgcus hfsrn ן ף ן v j "vrv

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At the very end of our Sedra this week, one last item is described. This is the Golden Altar, on which the Priest would offer incense twice a day, every morning and afternoon. It was placed in the inner Sanctuary, near the Golden Menorah.

The Rabbis ask a question: why is this important part of the Sanctuary left to the very end? Surely it belongs in last week's Sedra, in which all the other details of the Sanctuary were described?

One answer is: the Golden Altar is left to the end because it expresses the purpose of the entire Sanctuary. It is the climax. This is because the service at the Golden Altar was *solitary*. Other services in the Sanctuary were public. By contrast, when the Priest entered the Sanctuary to offer incense on the Golden Altar, he was alone with G-d. The Jerusalem Talmud² states that even angels, spiritual forces, were not able to be present. There was simply the indwelling of the Divine, together with the Priest who was offering the incense.

This stresses the private, personal dimension of all Jewish observance. Because of the social warmth of Jewish life, we sometimes forget the joy and fulfilment which Judaism can give us as an individual. Each Mitzvah (Commandment) is a personal link with G-d.

We might carry out the Commandment alone, or with a group of people. Yet there always is an intimate personal dimension. The focus on the Golden Altar in the Sedra, placing it at the end of the entire depiction of the construction of the Sanctuary and the making of the garments of the Priests, reminds us of a crucial concept. Through Jewish practice in our day to day world, whether putting on Tefilin, lighting Shabbat candles, giving Tzedakah, learning Torah, and of course prayer - every individual in effect enters the fragrant atmosphere of the Sanctuary and offers incense, alone in the presence of the Divine³.

1. Exodus 27:20-30:10. 2. Yoma 5:2. 3. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 1 pp. 171-2.

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SEDRA TETZAVEH

TRIBAL STONES

'Do you know which Tribe we are?' Nati asked his sister Ethel, as they both lay sprawled out on their sofa settee in their living room. 'Tribe?' replied Ethel in amusement. 'You know,' said Nati, 'we must be from a particular Tribe of the Jewish people. And with each Tribe there is a gemstone that goes with it too'.

'What do you mean?' asked Ethel.

'Look,' said Nati, 'we must be from one Tribe or another. There were twelve Tribes altogether. Some people are Cohanim or Levites: they all come from the Tribe of Levi. Then there's everyone else!'

'Our Dad's not a Cohen or Levi,' said Ethel. 'So what could we be?'

'Well, most people are probably either from the Tribe of Judah or from Benjamin. But in fact we could be from any Tribe: Rueben, Shimon, Menasseh.... And every Tribe had a precious stone. That's what I was learning in school...

'Our teacher taught us about the breastplate the High Priest used to wear in the Sanctuary and the Temple. It was called the Breastplate of Judgement. Set on the Breastplate were set twelve different stones, one for each Tribe.'

'I remember now,' said Ethel. 'And on each one was engraved the name of that Tribe.'

'That's right', replied Nati. 'And they were very special. If the King needed to ask G-d a question then he would go to the High Priest and he would look at the words engraved on the precious stones on the Breastplate. He would be able to see the right answer... '

'I heard the letters would light up. They would spell out the answer from G-d'.

'Yes. And then the King would know what had to be done.'

'That's truly incredible' said Ethel. 'Imagine being able to ask G-d directly when you need to know something....'

'You're right. But anyway, those precious stones, they were really something: emerald, topaz, sapphire, amethyst, onyx...'

'I wonder which was the most important stone', Ethel said.

'The one that is of *your* Tribe!' said Nati. 'So if we can find that out, then we will know...'

'Well, when Moshiach comes, then we will really know!', said Ethel. 'We will know which Tribe we come from, and which precious stone is ours. And there also will be a High Priest, and he will again wear the Breastplate of Judgement...'

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