

## The Ketoret - הקטורת

You are Hashem, our God, before Whom our fathers burned the incense of spices when the Holy Temple was standing, as You commanded them by the hand of Moses Your prophet, as it is written in Your Torah: (Exodus 30:34-36)

And Hashem said to Moses, Take for yourself spices— stacte, onycha, and galbanum spices, and pure frankincense, [they] shall be in equal weights. You will make it into incense, a compound mixed by a compounder, salted, undefiled, and holy. You will pulverize some of it very fine and place it before the [Ark of] in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you; it will be to you holy of holies."

It is also written: (Exodus 30:7-8)

And Aaron shall burn upon it [the Altar] incense of spices every morning; when he cleans the lamps, he will burn it. And when Aaron lights the lamps in the afternoon, he will burn it; a constant incense-offering before Hashem throughout your generations.

(Maseches Kreisos 6a; Jerusalem Talmud, Maseches Yoma 4:5)

The Rabbis taught: How was the incense compounded? Three hundred and sixty-eight were comprised therein, three hundred and sixty-five corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, one *maneh* for each day— half in the morning and half in the afternoon. From the three remaining *manim* the Kohein Gadol brought two handfuls [into the Holy of Holies] on Yom Kippur; [for which purpose] they were put back into the mortar on the eve of Yom Kippur, and ground [again] very thoroughly, in order to make them very fine.

Eleven kinds of spices were used for it.

They were: **1)** balm, **2)** onycha, **3)** galbanum, **4)** frankincense— by weight, seventy *maneh* of each; **5)** myrrh, **6)** cassia, **7)** spikenard and **8)** saffron— in weight sixteen *maneh* of each; **9)** twelve *maneh* of costus, **10)** three of aromatic bark, and **11)** nine of cinnamon.

[Also used in the incense compound were:] Nine *kabin* A *kab* is a sixth of a *se'ah*. of Carshina lye, Cyprus wine [measuring] three *s'in* and three *kabin*— if he had no Cyprus wine, he could use strong white wine— a fourth of a *kab* of Sodom salt, and a minute quantity of *maaleh ashan*. *This herb causes the smoke of the burning incense to ascend in a straight line.* **Rabbi Nosson** of Babylonia says, Jordan amber was added of a minute quantity, and if one added honey, *Included are various sweeteners such as dates and other fruits.* it (the incense) became unfit; and if one any of its spices he was liable to the death penalty."

**Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel** says: The balm is nothing but sap which drips from the balsam tree. the lye of Carshina was used for rubbing the onycha in order to refine its appearance. The Cyprus wine was used to soak the onycha to give it a pungent odor. Though the water of Raglayim was well suited for that purpose, they did not bring the water of Raglayim into the Temple because it would be disrespectful.

It was taught in a *Boraysa*: **Rabbi Nosson** says, While [the Kohein] ground [the incense] he would say, '*Hodeik heiteiv, heiteiv hodeik,*' because the sound *Some suggest that the sound of these specific words affects the spices.* is good for the spices. If half *184 manim* instead of *368*. the quantity of incense was prepared it was acceptable, but if only a third or a fourth [of it was prepared] we have not heard<sup>14</sup>*i.e., we did not hear our teachers expound this question.* [whether it was acceptable."]

**Rabbi Yehuda** said, This is the general rule: If [it was prepared with all its ingredients] in the correct proportion, it is acceptable even if only half was prepared; but if he left out any of its spices, he was liable for the death penalty.

It was taught in a *Boraysa*: **Bar Kappara** says, Once in sixty or seventy years the accumulated surplus was sufficient to provide half [the yearly quantity of incense." ] **Bar Kappara** also taught, If he would have put into it a minute quantity of honey, no one could have withstood [resisted] the scent. Why was no honey mixed with it? Because the Torah says, (*Leviticus 2:11*) For any leaven or honey, do not burn from them, [as] a fire-offering to Hashem.