

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 32

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Rehov Kahanamin 54, Bnei Brac 03.616.6340
164 Village Path, Lakewood NJ 08701 732.370.3344 fax 1.877.Pirchei (732.367.8168)

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Lesson

32

Ein K'Elokeinu & Pittum HaKetores:

There is no one like Our G-d &
The Sweet Smelling Incense

Background מקורות

At the very end of davening we recite a prayer called *Ein K'Elokeinu* (There is no one like Our G-d), which is a prayer that begins with a poetic statement of fact that there is no one like Our G-d... Our Master...Our King...Our Redeemer. Who is like Our G-d... Blessed is Our G-d and finally, You are Our G-d... The *Malachim* (angels) in Heaven said these expressions of praise and Rebbe Akiva overheard them when he involved himself in the esoteric knowledge of the *Merkavah* (a *Kabbalistic* concept surrounding *Hashem* and His Throne of Glory).

After these expressions of praise, we begin the portion of *Pittum HaKetores*.

Pittum HaKetores

In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* there was a very coveted daily service that the *Kohanim* performed. This service is known as the *Ketores* (incense) offering, a fire-offering consisting of eleven specific spices which was not only a coveted service, but also even the laws pertaining to its production and its recipe's use for private purposes is very restricted according to *Torah Halacha*¹. The combination of these special spices was burned on the innermost *mizbei'ach* twice a day. Their scent was unusually pleasant and sweet. In the daily order of davening, the recipe for making the *Ketores* and some of its laws are outlined in two places. The first time it is mentioned in the *Korbanos* section before the start of *Pesukei De'Zimra*. There we begin with the verses from the Torah² where G-d commands *Moshe* to tell the Israelites to make the recipe for *Ketores* from the eleven spices that the Torah enumerates. The

¹ See *Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah* 103

² *Shemos* 30:34

Torah commands us to offer them up on the inside Golden Altar twice daily, once in the morning and again in the afternoon towards evening. The Torah verses are recited and are immediately followed by the *Beraissa* in the *Gemara* in *Krissus* that teaches the meaning of these *pesukim* with the exact recipe for preparing them. Then we again recite the order of the *Ketores* in the prayer of *Ein K'Elokeinu* at the very end of *Tefillas Shacharis*.

The Lottery

In the *Mishna* in *Meseches Yoma*, we find that the various families of *Kohanim* on a weekly rotation performed the daily sacrificial services. Amongst the *Kohanim* themselves there was competition who would do any particular *Avodah*. In order to settle this in an orderly fashion, the *Kohanim* would be chosen for their jobs through a lottery. The *Mishna* in *Yoma* describes these lotteries where the *Kohanim* would gather around in a circle with someone in the middle and they would stick out a finger or two towards the center of the circle. A number would be chosen and then it was used to count the people by their fingers. Wherever the count would end, that's the *Kohen* who would be awarded the rights to do a particular *Avodah* of the day. The *Mishna* then says that when they announced that the *Kohanim* should come for the lottery to offer-up the *Ketores*, only those *Kohanim* who never had the opportunity to this service before were allowed entry into this lottery. The reason is because the *Gemara* states that one who offers-up the *Ketores* will become wealthy. Therefore, this special blessing was distributed to as many people as possible.

There are many traditions regarding the special nature of blessings for one who recites the *Ketores* daily. We will first examine the *Halachic* issues as mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* Simon 132.

Pittum HaKetores – Recited twice each day

The Rama mentions there, that at the end of davening in the morning one should recite *Pittum HaKetores* and then again in the evening. Along with *Pittum HaKetores* one recites *Ein K'Elokeinu*. The *Mishna Berura* clarifies that we recite *Pittum HaKetores* in the evening either before *Tefillas Mincha* or after it. The reason we recite it twice is because it was offered-up in the *Beis Hamikdash* twice each day. The *Mishna Berura* also notes that even though *Pittum HaKetores* is recited twice each day, the *Shir shel Yom* - The Song of the Day, which was also sung twice a day in the *Beis Hamikdash*, is only recited once a day. The reason is because the *Shir shel Yom* is the song that the *Levi'im*

³ *Daf*6a-b

recited by the *Korban Tamid's* libation-offering⁴. Since the afternoon's libation-offering was sometimes delayed until nighttime, there wouldn't be Song sung by the *Levi'im* because the rule is that *Shira* is not sung at night. Therefore, when we recite the *Shir shel Yom* during davening, we only recite it once since that was the minimum in the *Beis Hamikdash* as well.

Ein K'Elokeinu and Pittum HaKetores

Ein K'Elokeinu speaks of *Hashem's* uniqueness in four different ways. It expresses *Hashem's* praise as Our G-d Who watches over us, as Our Master Who rules us, as Our King Who assures us, and as Our Redeemer who saves us. Then after these praises we begin the order of the recipe for making the *Ketores*.

It would seem that there is no connection between the two. Why did our Sages put these two disparate segments together?

The *Shibalei Haleket* right at the beginning of his *sefer* (book) brings an explanation in the name of *Rashi* that answers this question. He writes that *Ein K'Elokeinu* is recited mainly on Shabbos for the following reason.

Ein K'Elokeinu consists of five stanzas with each stanza made up of four parts. Each stanza has in it references to *Hashem* as Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer. The first stanza begins each reference with the Hebrew word "*Ein K'...*" - there is no one like ... Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer. Then "*Mi K'...*" - who is like ... Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer? Then "*Nodeh L'...*" - let's show gratitude to ... Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer. Finally, the fourth stanza says, "*Baruch ...*" - blessed is Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer and the last stanza begins "*Atta Hu...*" You are ... Our G-d, Master, King and Redeemer.

Ein Mi Nodeh in Hebrew spells the word *Amen*. With the next stanza beginning with *Baruch* and then *Atta*, it reads *Amen, Baruch Atta* (confirmed; Blessed are You). Each stanza of *Ein Mi and Nodeh* four times is like twelve times *Amen*. Since on Shabbos we do not recite the full amount of *brochos* (blessings) as we do on a weekday, which number nineteen (19), we add the segment of *Ein K'Elokeinu* which resembles saying *Amen, Baruch Atta* twelve (12) times, it's like reciting twelve (12) blessings in addition to the seven (7) blessings of the *Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei* which gives us a total of nineteen (19) just like a weekday *Shemoneh Esrei*. So we are basically saying this to

⁴ The libation was a combination of wine that was poured onto the *mizbei'ach* along with a flour-offering that was burned on the *mizbei'ach*. This offering was sometimes delayed until nighttime as it wasn't integral to the *Korban's* acceptance.

complement the *Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei*. Then we proceed to *Ein K'Elokeinu*, which is recited for the reason cited earlier on in this lesson.

The following reason explains why *Ein K'Elokeinu* precedes *Pittum HaKetores* during the week as well.

The *Nodah Be'Yehudah* explains that the reason we preface *Pittum HaKetores* with *Ein K'Elokeinu* has to do with the Heavenly blessing associated with the *Ketores*. Since one who merits to offer-up the *Ketores* on the inner *mizbei'ach* will be blessed with riches, one may attribute his good fortune to his own financial prowess. The Torah strictly prohibits such an attitude as it tells us in *parshas Eikev*⁵, that one should not think that he could be successful in earning a livelihood without *Hashem* willing it. Both *Targum Onkeles* and *Yonasan* on this verse which states in Hebrew *Ki Hu hanosein lecha ko'ach la'asos chayil* explains that the *pasuk* is saying that *It is Hashem who gives you THE IDEAS how to make money*. Even the thoughts of how, where, and when to invest are all given to us by *Hashem*. In order to point out this truth by the service of *Ketores* which brings wealth to the individual, we preface it with *Ein K'Elokeinu* which is praise to *Hashem* attributing everything to Him and that there is no other power other than Him, *including ourselves!*

Ein K'Elokeinu only on Shabbos

In passing, *Rashi* mentioned that *Ein K'Elokeinu* was recited specifically on Shabbos when the *Shemoneh Esrei* is reduced to just seven (7) *brachos*.

It seems as though *Rashi's* custom was to recite *Pittum HaKetores* without *Ein K'Elokeinu* during the weekdays since we do not lack any blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* then. Accordingly, on weekdays one would begin with *Pittum HaKetores* right away. Possibly even according to *Rashi*, we recited the same praise of *Ein K'Elokeinu* before starting *Pittum HaKetores* for the sake of uniformity in our prayers. Alternatively, perhaps the custom was to recite *Pittum HaKetores* after davening only on *Shabbos* for the reason the Rama mentions in *Shulchan Aruch*.

⁵ 8:17

Im Chissar Achas Misamameha Chayav Missah⁶

One who skips one of its ingredients while preparing the recipe for the Ketores is liable to pay with his life!

Since the *Ketores*' recipe is so exact, that if one would prepare it while missing just one of its ingredients he is responsible for this transgression with his life, the Rama mentions that it was the custom not to recite *Pittum HaKetores* on a weekday since people usually rush out to work straight from davening and they do not have time enough to recite *Pittum HaKetores* properly without accidentally skipping something from its ingredients causing people to fall - *Heaven forbid* - into the category of *Im Chissar Achas Misamameha Chayav Misah* - *One who skips one its ingredients while preparing the recipe for the Ketores is responsible with his life!*

There happens to be a *machlokes* (difference of opinion) what this *Halacha* applies to. According to *Rashi* this warning applies only to the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom Kippur* since an invalid offering of *Ketores* is considered as entering the Holy of Holies for no purpose. *Tosefos* and the *Rambam* maintain that this warning is for offering-up a deficient *Ketores* offering any day of the year. The *Rama* seems to follow this interpretation. Therefore, the custom of *Ashkenaz* is not to recite the entire portion of *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Pittum HaKetores* on a weekday. Unfortunately, along with this safeguard from the terrible punishment of *chayav missah* (liable to pay with his life), we miss out on an extremely important part of davening. *Sephardim* and *Nusach Sefard* do recite these passages even during the week based on the holy writings of the *Ari* zt"l.

In truth, even according to *Nusach Ashkenaz*, it is not necessary to miss out completely on this important *tefilla* as will soon see.

אתה תקום תרחם ציון וכו' *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone*

אתה הוא שהקטירו אבותינו וכו' *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu*

After *Ein K'Elokeinu* and before beginning *Pittum HaKetores* we insert the above *pesukim*. On weekdays we insert *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone* אתה תקום תרחם ציון (You will stand up and have mercy over Zion). On *Shabbos* we recite *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* אתה הוא שהקטירו אבותינו (You are the One that our forefathers burned the *Ketores* offering). Why the difference?

⁶ *Kerisus Daf 6a*

Dayan Weiss zt"l in his *Responsa Minchas Yitzchok*⁷ explains that these passages are mentioned by the *Abudraham* to be said as follows. *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* is said before *Pittum HaKetores* and *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone* is said after *Pittum HaKetores*. Likewise, the *Baal HaTanya* in his Siddur (Prayer Book), which follows the custom of the *Ari zt"l* writes to recite both passages on weekdays, *Shabbos* and festival days. First *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone* and then *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* right before starting *Pittum HaKetores*. It is apparent that the passage *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* אתה הוא שהקטירו אבותינו (You are the One that our forefathers burned the Ketores offering) is said as an introduction to *Pittum HaKetores*. In fact, *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* is recited in the *Korbanos* section before saying the *pesukim* and the *beraissa* of *Pittum HaKetores* before *Pesukei De'Zimra*. It is quite clear then that these words are not part of the *Ein K'Elokeinu* prayer; rather, it is an intro to *Pittum HaKetores*. The other passage *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone* אתה תקום תרחם ציון (You will stand up and have mercy over Zion) is just a solitude prayer that was inserted here at the end of davening. According to the *Birchei Yosef*⁸ it is important to recite *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* when reciting *Pittum HaKetores* before *Pesukei De'Zimra*, which is recited to commemorate the *Ketores* brought in the *Beis Hamikdash* twice a day. When saying *Ein K'Elokeinu* it is not necessary to recite this introduction as it is only being repeated for the sake of its inherent power to protect an individual from harm. Therefore, the custom during the week is to recite *Atta sakum terachem Tziyone* as a payer but not the verse *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu*.

According to the above clarification, according to the Rama's custom of not reciting *Ein K'Elokeinu* during the week but only on *Shabbos*, it follows that one wouldn't say the passage *Atta Hu she'hiktiru avoseinu* during the week (even if one wishes to recite *Ein K'Elokeinu* itself without *Pittum HaKetores*), only on *Shabbos* when *Pittum HaKetores* is recited in full.

According to the above, even those davening *Ashkenaz* can say it before *Pesukei De'Zimra* at one's own pace without skipping any *Ketores* from the list.

The Benefits of Reciting Pittum HaKetores

In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* the *Gemara* relates that the person who would bring the *Ketores* would receive a Heavenly blessing for wealth. The *Gemara* learns this from verse *Yasimu ketorah be'apecha* (they shall place incense before You lit. in Your nostrils)

⁷ Volume 8:12

⁸ 132: 6

which is followed by the verse *Bareich Hashem cheilo* (*Hashem* should bless his strength). This juxtaposition teaches us that offering the *Ketores* brings blessing to one's wealth.

Our Sages teach: One who recites the verses and the teachings of the laws of *Korbanos* nowadays is considered as if he would have brought them in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*. According to this teaching, nowadays there are more opportunities for receiving the Heavenly blessing for *Ketores* than in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, for in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* very few individuals were afforded this honor as the *Gemara* related that only new participants were accepted in the daily lottery.

In order to receive this blessing, one should recite the *pesukim* along with the related teachings from the *Talmud* and understand what it means according to the best of one's ability. This is based on the advice of the *Chafetz Chaim* for anyone reciting the sections of *Korbanos* which are considered as if one offered them in the *Beis Hamikdash* itself.

Ein K'Elokeinu: Anecdotes

There is a famous question that has been asked about the sequence of *Ein K'Elokeinu* which begins first with the phrases which state "*There is no one like our G-d*" and then it continues with phrases which state "*Who is like our G-d?*" Why do we first begin with what seemingly is an answer and then go back to ask a question? Wouldn't it be more logical to begin with "*Who is like our G-d?*" before we say "*There is no one like our G-d*"? The answer given to this question is that when we deal with questions about faith, we must first assert faithfully our tradition that "*There is no one like our G-d*". Only afterwards can we deal properly with questions like "*Who is like our G-d?*". The following story illustrates one aspect of this point.

Having Faith – Despite Lack of Clarity

One day, the *Chasam Sofer - Rav Moshe Sofer zt"l* was approached by his son *Rav Shimon* with some difficult question regarding Jewish faith which were posed to him by a certain *apikores* (heretic), which he had difficulty answering. The *Chasam Sofer* listened intently to his son as he posited those questions to him; but he offered no answers. A few days later, the *Chasam Sofer* called his son over to him and asked him to repeat the questions. This time, the *Chasam Sofer* answered each question thoroughly. *Rav Shimon* listened carefully to his father as he answered each question with such erudition; but he was left with just one puzzling question, why did his father not answer his questions a few days earlier when he first asked them? *Rav Shimon* asked his father about this and this is what his father answered him. He said, "I wanted to demonstrate to you that even if one has difficult questions about *Emunah*, one should not become overwhelmed by them, but should continue one's *Avodas Hashem* in his usual manner despite his lack of clarity because one knows that there must be an

answer even if one is not presently aware of it". This brings out the point that we are first and foremost aware that "There is no one like our G-d" before one gets involved with questions regarding "Who is like our G-d?".

Our Faith is ingrained in our Souls

Our faith in our Creator does not hinge on our intellect. It is something ingrained in our souls through our deep-rooted tradition and only on that basis can we approach questions about faith in a meaningful way. There is another aspect to this that is illustrated by the following discussion. *Rav Chaim Brisker zt"l* made the following observation about *Avraham Avinu's* behavior at his test of *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the Binding of Isaac). Our Sages mention that *Avraham* had a very difficult question regarding *Hashem's* command to him to bind *Yitzchok* and sacrifice him on an altar on the mountain of *Moriah*. The problem was that *Hashem* had already promised him that only through *Yitzchok* will *Avraham* be perpetuated. He will be his progenitor; no one else. Yet *Hashem* commands him to sacrifice his one and only son a *Korban*, which effectively rules out the fulfillment of *Hashem's* first promise. Yet, the *Medrash* notes that *Avraham Avinu* finally asked this question after the *Akeida*. He poses the question as well as the answer that *Hashem* only requested that *Avraham* go through the motions to show his devotion and willingness to fulfill *Hashem's* command regardless of the consequence. Now that *Avraham* finally realized this, he asked the question and gave the answer himself. *Rav Chaim* points out, had he asked the question earlier, he would not have received an answer. *Avraham* understood that now was not the time to even ask such difficult questions. Rather his duty was to follow *Hashem's* commands faithfully; leaving his questions aside for a more opportune time.

Mitzvas Me'ah Brochos – Saying 100 Blessings Daily

There's a special requirement that one should recite one hundred *brochos* (blessings) daily. The Rabbinical Authorities (*Poskim*) mention that on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* days we are usually deficient in the count of the one hundred *brochos* since the *Shemoneh Esrei* of those days consist only of seven (7) *brochos* a piece instead of nineteen (19). Although there is an additional *Shemoneh Esrei* for *Mussaf* there are only twenty eight (28) *brochos* in all as opposed to the fifty seven (57; 3x19) for the three (3) weekday *Shemoneh Esreis*.

According to many *Poskim* if one is short of one hundred *brochos* on these days, one can count *Ein K'Elokeinu* for the fulfillment of the *Me'ah* (100) *brochos*. According to the opinion of *Rashi* mentioned beforehand, it should count like twelve (12) *brochos* as that's how many *brochos* were needed to fill the amount of *brochos* missing from *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The *Kolbo* holds that *Ein K'Elokeinu* is considered like twenty (20) *brochos* as there are five (5) stanzas, with four (4) parts to each stanza.

On *Yom Kippur Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Pittum HaKetores* are omitted as there are numerous praises in the liturgy of *Yom Kippur* so that it's not necessary for the *tzibbur* (congregation) to recite it. *Pittum HaKetores* is also not necessary to be recited by the *tzibbur* as there were plenty of *Korbanos* (sacrifices) mentioned in the prayers. However, the *poskim* suggest that individuals recite it anyway as the particular spices were not mentioned⁹.

On *Tisha B'Av* we also omit *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Pittum Haketores*¹⁰, but for a different reason. Since on *Tisha B'Av* we are restricted from engaging in Torah study, we refrain from this as well as it constitutes Torah study. Likewise, a mourner refrains from saying both *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Pittum Haketores*¹¹.

The Ma'aseh HaKetores: Ketores Recipe and its Production¹²

What did the *Ketores* consist of and how was it brought? This is explained in the *beraissa* of *Pittum HaKetores*. We will now explain what the *beraissa* says.

In all, there were eleven (11) spices in the *Ketores* recipe. The eleven spices are not all listed in the verses of the Torah, but they are derived from there and they were transmitted to *Moshe Rabbeinu* orally at *Har Sinai* (Mount Sinai).

The eleven (11) spices are:

Tzari (STACTE), *Tziporen* (ONYCHA), *Chelbenah* (GALBANUM), *Levona* (FRANKINCENSE). Each of these ingredients weighed seventy (70) *maneh*¹³.

⁹ *Mishna Berura* 622:5

¹⁰ *Rama* 559:4, *Levush* 559:6, *Ishei Yisrael* 26:18

¹¹ *Pischei Teshuva Yoreh De'ah* 384:2

¹² *Gemara Kerisus* 6a

¹³ A *maneh* is the weight of 100 silver *Dinar* coins (*Rambam Hilchos Klei Hamikdash* 2:3)

Mor (MYRRH), *Ketzia* (CASIA), *Shiboles neird* (SPIKE-LAVENDER) and *Charkom* (SAFRON). Each of these ingredients weighed sixteen (16) *maneh*.

Kosht (COSTUS) twelve (12) *maneh*. *Kilufa* (AROMATIC-BARK) three (3) *maneh*, and *Kinamon* (CINNAMON) nine (9) *maneh*.

In all there were 368 *maneh*, an entire year's supply of *Ketores*. 365 *maneh* corresponds with the days of a solar year, a *maneh* each day, half in the morning and half in the afternoon. The three extra portions were brought by the *Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur into the Holy of Holies*. First, those extra portions were returned into the grinder on *Erev Yom Kippur* to be ground extra fine. The additional portions that there were because the solar year is longer than the lunar calendar were spent during the eventual leap year which had an additional thirty (30) days.

There were a few additional ingredients which were used in the preparation of the *Ketores* mixture.

Boris Karshina (KARSHINA¹⁴ SOAP), nine *kav*.

Yayn Kafrisin (KAFRISISIN¹⁵ WINE) three *se'ah* and three (3) *kav*.

Melach Sedomis (SODOMITE SALT) *rova hakav* (a quarter of a *kav*).

Ma'aleh Ashan a minute amount (an ingredient which causes the smoke to rise upward in a straight column).

If KAFRISIN WINE wasn't available it would be substituted with a white wine.

The KARSHINA SOAP was used to scrub the ONYCHA from its impurities.

The ONYCHA was soaked in KAFRISIN WINE in order to intensify the fragrance.

According To *Rebbe Nasan of Bavel* (Babylon) there was a minute amount of *Kipas Hayarden* (JORDAN AMBER).

The Chelbena Spice

Although the *Ketores* was a sweet smelling fragrance, one of the ingredients, *Chelbena*, was a thick, dark, foul-smelling substance taken from a tree from Greek origin.

¹⁴ *Karshina* is the name of a city of its origin

¹⁵ *Kafrisin* is the name of a city of its origin

The *Gemara* in *Kerisus*¹⁶ states that any public fast that doesn't have the participation of some wayward individuals is not considered a (successful) public fast.

One can reason that the inclusion of this spice is meant to teach us a lesson of acceptance of individuals who have strayed from the path of *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism) and sullied themselves with sin, can still come back into the "fold" to join them for a *minyan*¹⁷ and become part of the "fold" once again. This does not mean that we are to accept them despite their wayward behavior; rather it means that in the setting of serious repenting, they should also be brought in to participate in repenting and mending their ways. The *Maharsha* to the *Gemara* in *Kerisus* that in order for this to work, one needs the same ratio of 10: 1 as was the case of the *Ketores* which had ten (10) sweet smelling spices and one (1) foul smelling *Chelbena* spice. One must realize in order for such endeavors to be successful, one needs to have a solid backing of a group of individuals who can help influence them to better their ways and begin doing the will of their Creator.

We can add that when this setting is in place, not only does the "*Chelbena-type*" individual benefit, but all those around him will gain spiritual benefits as well. This concept is brought in the book of *Ran's*¹⁸ *Dissertations*¹⁹ where he suggest that the purpose of combining the *Chelbena* along with the other spices was to bring out the full aroma from the other ten (10) sweet smelling ones. Likewise, the involvement of ten Jews in the spiritual welfare of a wayward individual will bring out greater spiritual heights amongst those who are helping bring this individual closer to *Hashem*.

Ketores Protects

11. *Moshe* said to *Aharon*, "Take the *Ketores* and put fire from the altar top into it. Then take it quickly to the congregation and atone for them, for wrath has gone forth from the Lord, and the plague has begun."

¹⁶ *Daf*6b

¹⁷ *Minyan* – To be counted as part of the Congregational Service, which requires 10 observant Jews to perform certain aspects of the Daily Prayers such as saying the *Kaddish* or reading the *Torah* publicly for the Congregation on *Shabbos*, *Holidays* and during the week on *Monday*s and *Thursday*s.

¹⁸ R' NISSIM BEN REUVEN OF GERONA - Born: Gerona, Spain, c. 1290. Died: Barcelona, Spain, c. 1380. Notes: Talmudic commentator and Halachist. Royal physician, lived most of his life in Barcelona where he was *Rav*, *Dayan*, and *Rosh Yeshiva*. He wrote in the traditions of the school of the *Ramban* and the *Rashba*. Author of *HaRan* a commentary on the *Rif*, *Chidushei HaRan*, a commentary to the *Talmud* (many question his authorship on *Shabbos*, which is the *Ritva*). Also wrote *Drashos HaRan* on the basis of faith and philosophy. Among his students were R' *Barfat*, R' *Chasdai Crescas*, and *Yossef Chaviva*.

¹⁹ *Drashos HaRan*, *Drush* 1

Rashi - And atone for them This secret was given over to him by the Angel of Death when he went up to heaven, that incense holds back the plague... as is related in Tractate *Shabbos* (89a).

12. *Aharon* took [it], just as *Moshe* had said, and he ran into the midst of the assembly, and behold, the plague had begun among the people. He placed the incense on it and atoned for the people.

13. He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased.

Rashi - He stood between the dead... He took hold of the angel and held him against his will. The angel said to him, "Allow me to accomplish my mission." He [*Aharon*] said to him, "*Moshe* commanded me to stop you." He said to him, "I am the messenger of the Omnipresent, and you are the messenger of *Moshe*." He said to him, "*Moshe* does not say anything on his own volition, but only at the bidding of the Almighty. If you do not believe [me], the Holy One, blessed is He, and *Moshe* are at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; come with me and ask." This is the meaning of the statement, "*Aharon* returned to *Moshe*" (*Mid. Tanchuma Tetzaveh* 15). Another interpretation: Why with incense? Because the Israelites were slandering and vilifying the incense, saying that it was a deadly poison; through it *Nadav* and *Avihu* died; through it two hundred and fifty people were burnt. The Holy One, blessed is He, said, "You shall see that it will stop the plague, and it is sin that caused their death." - [*Mid. Aggadah. See Mechilta Beshalach (Vayassa 6:5, Bereishis 33a)*]

The *Zohar* writes that whenever there is an outbreak of a plague (*Heaven* forbid) amongst the people, a decree is announced in Heaven that if the Jews would gather together as one, in their *Shuls* (synagogues) and *Batei Medrashim* (study halls), to recite the *Ketores* with earnest devotion, *Hashem* would stop the epidemic.

From here we see that just as the actual *Ketores* was used by *Aharon HaKohen* to end the plague in the times of *Korach*, likewise we have the same power collectively to recite the *Ketores*, and bring deliverance to our fellow Jews.

Segulah²⁰

Many people consider saying the passages of the *Ketores* as a *Segulah* (a sacred object or ritual which give spiritual energy for healing or blessing) for earning one's *Parnassah* (livelihood). Some people consider it special if the *Ketores* passages are written on parchment with black ink with a quill similar to the writing in a *Sefer Torah*.

Peace: The Key to Everything

After reciting the passages of *Ein K'Elokeinu* and of *Pittum HaKetores*, we end off with homiletic passages of the Talmud that the torah scholars are the promoters of peace in the entire world and then we recite the following verse²¹: *Hashem oze le'ammo yitein*

²⁰ A *Segulah* is something which is hidden from the eyes of most people, it is therefore a desirable action which is considered to be beloved in the Heavenly spheres and provides benefits and has inherent powers that are not understandable to us, but the reason for it at the same time is not revealed to us, *Shemos*. 19:5, *Sha'arei Aharon, Parshas Yisro, Perek* 19:5

²¹ *Tehillim* 29:11

Hashem yevareich es ammo baShalom (G-d will give His people strength, G-d will bless His people with peace).

This ending is a fitting ending for the closing of the Morning *Tefilla* in general and it is particularly appropriate for the closing of this segment of prayer. Firstly, after all our prayers are recited, we beseech *Hashem* for the key ingredient to preserve all the blessing we seek from *Hashem*. Peace is that key ingredient as our sages teach us in the final *Mishna* in all of *Mishnayos*²² that *Hashem* found no better receptacle to hold all blessings of the world other than peace. If there is peace, one can enjoy the benefits of material and spiritual wealth without hindrance. If there is no peace due to inner or external turmoil, then it is difficult to utilize and maximize one's physical or spiritual needs and ambitions. In particular, the *Ketores* promotes peace by joining all ten (10) sweet smelling spices into one blend along with the *Chelbena* spice. It promotes peace by protecting from pestilence and other harmful incidents. It also helps one to attain financial security which is key in releasing one from the curse of Adam to earn his livelihood by the "sweat of your brow shall you eat bread²³" and allowing one more free time in service of his Creator.

The Kaddish De'Rabbanan

After reciting *Pittum HaKetores*, *Kaddish De'Rabbanan* is recited. A mourner or someone else who has lost a parent usually recites the *Kaddish De'Rabbanan*. This *Kaddish* is especially designed to be recited after learning a passage from the *Talmud*. It has a specific section that praises those who devote themselves to Torah study and prays for their welfare and good fortune.

The same *Kaddish* is recited after the *Korbanos* section of davening which precedes *Pesukei De'Zimra*. This *Kaddish* is also recited after learning some *Mishnayos* in the home of a mourner or elsewhere. It is customary in those instances to recite the a familiar homiletic saying of *Rebbe Chanania ben* (the son of) *Akashya*. His saying was " *Hashem* wished to increase the merit of His nation *Yisrael*; therefore he increased for them the amount of Torah and *mitzvos* which they could learn and perform". Here too, we recite a different homiletic passage from the *Talmud*, about Torah scholars who promote peace in the world through their dedication to Torah study and to upholding its *mitzvos*.

We mentioned in an earlier lesson that the world's existence depends on *Kedusha De'Sidra* and on the *Kaddish* of *Aggadata* of *Shabbos* (homiletic teachings, which the

²² *Uktzin* 3:12

²³ *Bereishis* 3:17

Rabbis used to present on Shabbos afternoon). *Pittum HaKetores* along with the adjoining homiletic Talmudic passages with the *Kaddish De'Rabbanan* fulfills this dictum as well.

Borchu

After *Kaddish De'Rabbanan* there is a custom for the *Chazzan* or the one who recites the *Kaddish* to recite *Borchu* for the sake of anyone who may have missed saying *Borchu*. Some do not recite *Borchu* on days that there is *Krias HaTorah* since *Borchu* was recited there numerous times. In the Diaspora, it is not customary to say *Borchu* after *Ein K'Elokeinu* at all²⁴.

²⁴ Simon 133

Questions:

- 1) How many times is the *Ketores* offering recited during the course of a day? Where are they recited?
- 2) What was special about the *Ketores* that only those who never sacrificed it before are eligible to join in the lottery?
- 3) Why do we not repeat the *Shir shel Yom* just as we recite *Pittum HaKetores* twice a day?
- 4) According to *Rashi's* insight to *Ein ke'Elokeinu*, why is *Ein K'Elokeinu* only recited on Shabbos?
- 5) What other reason applies to *Ein K'Elokeinu* that is a reason for the week as well?
- 6) What reason is there NOT to recite *Ein K'Elokeinu* during the weekdays?
- 7) How does the *Gemara* derive that one who sacrifices the *Ketores* would become wealthy?
- 8) Which two stanzas of *Ein K'Elokeinu* seem to be out of sequence and why?
- 9) How many *brochos* is *Ein K'Elokeinu* worth towards fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Me'ah Brochos*?
- 10) During which momentous day of the year does the *tzibbur* omit *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Pittum HaKetores*?
- 11) What other day during the year is exempt from *Ein K'Elokeinu*?
- 12) Why do we mention more than just 11 spices in the *beraissa* of *Pittum HaKetores* and not just 11?
- 13) What type of *Kaddish* do we recite after *Ein K'Elokeinu*?

Answers:

- 1) We recite it a total of three (3) times. Once during the *Korbanos* section before *Pesukei De'Zimra*, again towards the end of *Shacharis* and another time either before or after *Mincha*.
- 2) Since it was something which would bring a blessing of wealth to the one who offers it up onto the *mizbei'ach*.
- 3) Since many times the *Shir shel Yom* was delayed until nighttime when the libations would finally be brought and one is not allowed to sing *shira* at night.
- 4) Since the purpose was to complement the seven (7) *brochos* of the *Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei* to bring it to a total of nineteen (19).
- 5) The *Nodah Be'Yehudah* explains that since *Pittum Haketores* brings blessing of wealth we preface it with *Ein K'Elokeinu* which declares that the blessing is not due to our own business prowess etc. but it is the blessing from *Hashem*.
- 6) Since during the week people are rushing to work and they are apt to omit one of the spices which would be punishable by Heavenly death when the *Ketores* would be prepared like that when the *Beis Hamikdash* stood.
- 7) Since it puts the verse *Bareich Hashem cheilo* next to *Yasimu ketorah be'apecha*.
- 8) *Kaddish De'Rabbanan*.
- 9) *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Mi K'Elokeinu*.
- 10) We count it either as 12 or 20 *brochos*.
- 11) *Yom Kippur*.
- 12) *Tisha B'Av*.
- 13) The rest of the spices were just to enhance the eleven (11).