

# ACTIVATING SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS THROUGH THE ANNOINTING OIL

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## YadAvNow.com Weekly Audio Series: Ki Sisa

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### Individualized and The Record is Prosecuted

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### Ritualization at The Waters Associated with His Holiness

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### Silver as Representation of Mercy

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### Why Recurring Murmurings

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### The Tension Between Ego & Reality

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1. Betzalel was chosen by G-d to oversee the building of the Mishkan.
2. He was endowed by G-d with knowledge, understanding, and Divine inspiration.
3. He was adept in conjugating the letters of the alphabet that brought about creation.
4. Mishkan: A microcosm of Creation that needed to be infused with energies that parallel existence.
5. Betzalel: Miriam's grandson, nephew of Moshe.
6. When Moshe announced Betzalel would oversee building of the Mishkan there were murmurings – claiming nepotism.
7. He chose Aaron, his brother as High Priest, his sons, assistants – and now his nephew for the Mishkan.
8. Midrash: Moshe explains why Betzalel is specially endowed and uniquely qualified.
9. They understood their own inadequacies and accepted Moshe's word.
10. After Sinai where G-d had said, "In you they will believe forever," how could they question the word of Moshe?
11. Korach and his community were at Sinai and attempted to usurp his leadership.
12. Although one accepts something as fact, internalizing it is another level.
13. One's ego whispers, "Why Not Me?"
14. Only when one understands a task is beyond his ability can one internalize what he believes

## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Ki Sisa

# ACTIVATING SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS THROUGH THE ANNOINTING OIL

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### The Characteristic that is Needed for Atonement

*Torah:* Regarding the half a silver coin (*machtzis ha'shekel*), "This shall they give...a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel*, the *shekel* is twenty *geras* (in weight), half a *shekel* as a portion to Hashem...The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a *shekel*...to atone for their souls." Every Jewish male of the age of twenty and above was required to give a half a silver coin, which was used to purchase communal offerings (*korbanei tzibur*) that brought about atonement. Regardless of one's financial status, one needed to give the half a silver coin – not more and not less. What is the significance of a "half (*machtzis*)" a silver coin? Why were they not required to give a whole silver coin?

*Torah:* Regarding the specifications of the Holy Ark that contained the Testament (*Torah*), "They shall make an Ark...two and a half cubits in length; a cubit and a half its width; and a cubit and a half its height."

*Baal Haturim:* The reason the specifications of the Ark had half measures was to indicate that in order for one to have the capacity to acquire and retain *Torah*, one needs to break his character traits. It is only when one is humbled that one becomes worthy of being a receptacle for *Torah*. Therefore, the concept of "half (*machtzis*)" connotes humility. The basis for sin is when one feels a sense of entitlement and empowerment. If one were to give more than the half a coin because of his financial capability, it would not qualify because it would be considered as if he was flaunting his wealth. This lack of humility is an impediment for atonement, thus undermining the purpose of the *machtzis ha'shekel*. A uniformity and anonymity must be maintained among the Jewish people to demonstrate the characteristic trait of humility.

It is interesting to note that *Baal Haturim* explains that the numerical value (*gematria*) of the word "*esrim* (twenty)", which was the weight of the half silver coin, is the same numerical value of the words "*asher v'daal*–the wealthy and the poor man." The weight of this coin

indicates that there is no differentiation between the wealthy and the poor. All Jews must see themselves as being of equal value in order to be eligible for atonement. In addition, the obligation of the *machtzis ha'shekel* begins at the age of twenty (*esrim*) and above – once again emphasizing the necessity of Jews seeing themselves in a humble context.

*Torah*: In order for an offering to be qualified as a sacrifice it must be unblemished (*tamim*). This level of perfection is required because the sacrifice is brought to G-d, Who is perfect. In order for the sacrifice to be valid, it must reflect G-d's characteristic of perfection. A Jew has an obligation of declaring his belief in the Unity of G-d (*Echad/One*).

*Maharal* of Prague: The numerical value of the word "*echad* (one) is thirteen. The Jewish people are comprised of thirteen tribes– twelve who were given a share in the Land of Israel and one (*Levy*), who did not. The fact that the Jewish people are comprised of thirteen tribes, reflects the characteristic of G-d, which is *echad/Unity*. *Maharal* explains further that not only do the Jewish people reflect G-d's Unity in number, but also within the infrastructure of the Tribes themselves.

The most spiritual of the thirteen tribes was the tribe of *Levy*, who did not sin with the Golden Calf. They were thus chosen to be the officiants of G-d. In order to indicate the unique status of the Tribe of *Levy*, they are classified with the letter "*aleph*" (one). Of the four wives of *Yaakov* two of them were Matriarchs (*Rachel* and *Leah*) of the Jewish people and the other two were considered concubines/ maidservants (*Bilhah* and *Zilpah*). The Matriarchs, who were of special spiritual status, bore for *Yaakov* eight sons– *Leah* mothered six and *Rachel* mothered two. The number eight is connoted with the letter "*ches*".

The wives of *Yaakov* who were maidservants, bore him four sons, which is connoted in Hebrew with the letter "*dahled*." Identifying the various levels of spirituality contained within the infrastructure of the tribes of Israel: there is the tribe of *Levy* which is represented through the "*aleph*", there are the children of the Matriarchs which are represented through the letter "*ches*", and there are the children of the maidservants represented through the letter "*dahled*." Combined, they equal/spell the word "*echad* (one)." Therefore, the Unity of G-d is reflected within the infrastructure of the Jewish people.

If the wealthy person were to give more than the half silver coin or the needy person were to give less, it

would be a breach in the characteristic of "*echad*" / unity of the Jewish people. Just as the sacrifice needed to be unblemished/perfect in its physicality in order to reflect the perfection of G-d, so too did the *machtzis ha'shekel* need to be given within the context of unity among the Jewish people to reflect the unity of G-d.

## The Fruits of One's Choice

*Midrash* citing a verse from Ecclesiastes: "Sweet is the sleep of the laborer– whether he eats a small or a large amount. The fullness of the wealthy man does not allow him to sleep.' King Solomon is addressing the various predicaments of the devoutly righteous who invest the years of their lives in *Torah* study...In one situation, an individual engages in *Torah* study and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until he passes away at the age of thirty. Another individual toils in *Torah* study and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until he passes away at the age of eighty.

Perhaps one would say that the one who toiled in *Torah* and *mitzvos* for seventy years is more deserving of reward than the one who only toiled for twenty years. To this, King Solomon responds, 'whether he eats a small or large amount ...' Meaning, the one who lived for thirty years could come before G-d and say, 'If You had not taken me in the middle of my days, I would have lived longer and would toiled for additional years in *Torah* and *mitzvos*.' Therefore, the level of reward for the one who lived less years is no less than the one who had toiled during his lengthy life."

*Midrash*: "Where do we see a proof of this? The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* served the Jewish people for forty years and lived until the age of one hundred and twenty. *Shmuel* the Prophet had only lived for fifty-two years during which he carried the burden of the Jewish people. Although, *Moshe* and *Shmuel* served the Jewish people for different lengths of time (*Shmuel* had passed away at a younger age) they are as deserving as one another. As the verse in Psalms equates them. It states, '*Moshe* and *Aaron* were among His priests and *Shmuel* was among those who invoke His Name...'"

*Torah*: There was a particular sin offering that was brought in the Temple, whose species was determined by one's financial status. The wealthy individual was obligated to bring an animal as his sin offering. The needy person brought a bird for his sin offering.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Menachos*: Although the wealthy man brought a meat offering of significant value that exuded a pleasant fragrance when roasted and the poor man brought a bird offering of minor value which exuded a foul odor because of the burning of its feathers, the *Torah* states regarding both of these offerings, “*Hashem* smelled the pleasing aroma.”

*Gemara*: “From this we learn that “Regardless of how much or how little one does, as long as it is done with the proper intent for the sake of G-d, they are valued identically.” One can only succeed to the degree of his potential, which is endowed to him by G-d. If one is given a short lifespan or is allocated limited finances, he must make due and address his potential within that context. He is required to invest his life in spirituality with a proper intent. G-d does not expect one to be more than he is meant to be.

*Mishna* in Tractate *Makkos*: If the court sentenced an individual to death and subsequently it was revealed that the witnesses that gave testimony to bring about the verdict were conspiring, if the death penalty was not yet carried out, the witnesses are put to death.

*Rebbe Akiva*: If the conspiring witnesses are held fully culpable for their evil intent although it did not come to fruition, how much more so should the one who intended to do a *mitzvah* and was not able to bring it to fruition be fully deserving of its reward. Thus, if one lived a life of *Torah* and *mitzvos* and was taken by G-d before he was able to carry out his spiritual aspirations, he is fully accredited for what he had intend to accomplish.

*Torah* in *Chayei Sarah*: “*Sarah’s* lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years these were the years of *Sarah’s* life.” If *Sarah* had lived 127 years, it is obvious that these were the years of her life. Why does the verse conclude with the words “these were the years of *Sarah’s* life” - seemingly it is superfluous?

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: Although *Sarah* passed away at the age of 127, which was before her intended time, she was fully accredited for all the years she would have lived as a devoutly righteous woman. The reason *Sarah* passed away prematurely was because *satan* had informed her that *Avraham* had bound her only child *Yitzchak* to be slaughtered as a sacrifice. *Sarah’s* life was fully invested in doing the Will of G-d. Every moment of her existence she yearned to bring about more. She was only denied her spiritual aspirations because of the circumstances that came upon her.

Therefore, she is fully accredited for all of the years she would have lived. This is the meaning of the conclusion of the verse, “these were the years of *Sarah’s* life.”

*Rambam* in *The Laws of Repentance* that every Jew can be as great as *Moshe Rabbeinu*. *Moshe*, the “*Ishe Elokim*,” had a direct relationship with G-d that was at the level of “face to face” (within the context of prophecy) and was chosen to be the conduit of *Torah* to the Jewish people. How is it possible that every Jew could ascend to that level? *Moshe’s* accomplishment was that he had actualized his potential. This reality is within the ability of every Jew. If a Jew meets his potential with which he was endowed, his accomplishment is no less valued than that of *Moshe*.

## Shabbos – a Day of Focus

*Torah*: Regarding the *Shabbos*, “*Hashem* said to *Moshe* saying, ‘...You must observe My *Shabbos*, for it is a sign between Me and you for generations... You shall observe the *Shabbos*, for it is holy to you; its desecrator shall be put to death...for six days work may be done and the seventh day is a day of complete rest...’” After describing the importance and significance of the *Shabbos* and its observance the *Torah* continues, “The Children of Israel shall observe (*v’shamru*) the *Shabbos*, to make (*laasos*) the *Shabbos* an eternal covenant...” Seemingly, the reiteration of the observance of the *Shabbos* is superfluous.

*Torah*: When *Yosef* had shared his dreams in the presence of his father, *Yaakov*, “*Aviv shamar es ha davar* – His father awaited/anticipated these things (to come about).” Meaning, after hearing *Yosef’s* dreams, *Yaakov* awaited with anticipation for them to come to fruition.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: The *Torah* uses the term “*v’shamru*” regarding the observance of the *Shabbos* to indicate that one must await its coming throughout the week with anticipation. During the week one is permitted to engage in all activity as long as it is in conformance with the *Torah*. However, on the *Shabbos* one must refrain from all creative activities. Rather than perceiving this restriction as a burden, the Jew must appreciate its value and thus anticipate the coming of the *Shabbos*. This is because the *Shabbos* is the most holy and special day of the week.

Since *Shabbos* is a time that it is forbidden to engage in creative activity and it must be observed as a day of rest, one could mistakenly perceive its value as a day to recoup one’s energies from the physical toil of the week. The *Torah* is telling us that this is not so.

*Ohr HaChaim*: The *Torah* uses the term “*laasos*” (to make) to indicate that one must actively engage in the holiness of the day. The *Shabbos* is not a time to be preoccupied with the physicality of the day, but rather one must focus on its spiritual value and observe the *Shabbos* for its own sake.

*Chazal*: *Shabbos* is a day that G-d enters into existence at a level unlike any other day. It is similar to the King entering into His Kingdom. Therefore, one should anticipate (*v'shamru*) His coming, and dedicate himself to doing His Will (*laasos*) on the *Shabbos*. Since the King enters into the home of every Jew on that day, one must conduct himself with proper reverence and illation – indicating the sense of privilege to be able to host the King.

*Midrash*: Every day of the week has its “mate.” For example, the mate of the first day of the week is the second day and the mate of the third day is the fourth day, etc. The *Midrash* continues, “*Shabbos* came before G-d and asked, ‘Every day of the week has its mate. What is my mate?’ G-d responded, ‘the Jewish people shall complete you (be your mate).’” When the Jewish people observe (*laasos*) the *Shabbos* properly, they complete existence. The six days of Creation were to prepare the setting for G-d to enter into existence on the Seventh Day (*Shabbos*). This is similar to the concept of “Build for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in your midst” (regarding the building of the *Mishkan*).

*Gemara*: The juxtaposition of the *Shabbos* to the building of the *Mishkan* is to teach us that the *Shabbos* cannot be violated for the sake of the building of the *Mishkan*. In addition, this juxtaposition teaches us that the thirty-nine classifications of creative activities that were necessary for the building of the *Mishkan* are the same creative activities that are forbidden on the *Shabbos*. Just as the *Mishkan* was the medium for G-d to dwell in the midst of the Jewish people, so too is the setting of the *Shabbos* the context in which G-d dwells in their midst. In order to facilitate this, one must be fully engaged with a proper mindset (*laasos*) in the observance of the *Shabbos*.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: “A non-Jew who observes the *Shabbos* is liable for the death penalty.”

*Midrash*: “If a non-Jew wishes to observe the *Shabbos* as the Jew, why should he be held liable and deserve to forfeit his life?” The *Midrash* answers, “It is similar to one who eavesdrops on an intimate conversation that is taking place between the king and his queen.” The non-Jew observing the *Shabbos* is the equivalent of this level of infringement. The *Shabbos* is a time of intimacy between G-d and the Jewish

people. As the *Gemara* states, “*Shabbos* is a semblance of the world to come.” The world to come is characterized to be the most intimate level of relationship between G-d and the Jew. Therefore, the Jew must anticipate the coming of the *Shabbos* because of its spiritual dimension.

## The Awesome Power of Torah

*Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah*: If one had performed all of the *mitzvos* of *Purim* on its proper day and subsequently because of certain circumstances that arose, the *Sanhedrin* determined that another month must be added to the calendar (a second *Adar*), is one obligated to perform again the *mitzvos* of *Purim* on the 14th of the second *Adar*? The *Gemara* concludes that must repeat all of the *mitzvos* that were performed in the first month again during the second month of *Adar*. Why is the second month of *Adar* considered to be so significant that one needs to perform the *mitzvos* of *Purim* again?

The basis for the question – whether the first month is primary or the second is based on the location of the month of *Adar* in the calendar. The month of *Adar* always follows the month of *Shvat* and precedes the month of *Nissan*. Normally, *Purim* is celebrated during *Adar* which follows the month of *Shvat*. If this is so, then the first *Adar* should be considered the primary *Adar*. However, simultaneously, the month of *Adar*, although it follows *Shvat* it precedes the month of *Nissan*. Meaning, *Purim* is normally celebrated before the month of *Nissan*. If so, during a leap year, *Purim* should be celebrated during the second *Adar*, which is the month that precedes *Nissan*. The *Gemara* concludes that one must celebrate *Purim* during the second *Adar* because “We juxtapose one redemption to another redemption.”

The festival of *Purim* commemorates the redemption of the Jewish people from the decree of *Haman*, that every Jewish man, woman, and child should be annihilated. Although their predicament seemed to be hopeless, at the last moment G-d caused the decree to be withdrawn and the Jewish people were given permission to destroy the *Amalekites*. Since the month of *Nissan* was the time that G-d had redeemed the Jewish people from the Egyptian bondage, it is therefore appropriate to celebrate *Purim* in a setting of redemption, which is the month that is associated with *Nissan*.

We are able to see from the question that is posed in the *Gemara* that the 14th and 15th day of the first month of

*Adar* also has relevance to commemorating the *Purim* miracle. In fact, normative Jewish law dictates that one does not recite certain prayers on these days because it assumes they assume a semi-holiday status. It is because the month of *Adar* inherently has relevance to redemption. The only question is which *Adar* is most appropriate to have relevance to celebration.

The celebration of *Purim* is day of commemoration of the victory over the *Amalekites*, those who personify evil. *Haman*, the prime minister of the Persian Empire, was the one responsible who had initiated the decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child. He was a direct descendant of *Agog*, the king of the *Amalekites*.

The first nation to attack the Jewish people after their miraculous redemption from Egypt were the *Amalekites*. After the splitting of the Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, the world stood in awe of the Jewish people. The aura that the Jewish people had possessed was a sanctification of G-d's Name. What G-d had done openly for them had never previously taken place in the history of existence.

*Torah*: "Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim."

*Midrash*: The value of identifying the location of the battle against *Amalek* as Rephidim is because it alludes to the quality of the *Torah* study of the Jewish people. It was done in a haphazard and laid-back manner. They were not fully engrossed in the *Torah* that they had been given. As a result of not being fully engaged in their *Torah* study, the Jewish people became vulnerable to attack by the *Amalekites*.

There is a positive commandment to remember what *Amalek* had done to the Jewish people when they had left Egypt as well as to obliterate their name from under the heavens. Despite the fact that the world stood in awe of the Jewish people because of what had transpired, the *Amalekites* were not affected by the miraculous events. They therefore chose to attack them.

*Chazal* depict *Amalek* as the fool who had jumped into a scolding bath. "Although the fool is burnt, he nevertheless cools the bath for all those who follow him." Because the *Amalekites* attacked the Jewish people, they dispelled the awesome aura that surrounded them. They perpetrated an act that had far-reaching ramifications. Until the end of time, their attack is the root of all the desecration of G-d's Name. If the aura of the Jewish people had not been diminished, the world

would have continued to see them as G-d's people and would have thus had a potential to achieve a level of truth. Therefore, *Amalek* deserves to be obliterated.

Had the Jewish people not been lackadaisical in their *Torah* study after they were redeemed, they would have not been vulnerable to the attack of *Amalek*. If sufficient *Torah* study would have protected the Jewish people from *Amalek*, how much more so would it provide them with protection them from all of their enemies. The Jew is under constant attack from the nations of the world. As it states, "The Jewish people are the equivalent of the sheep that are surrounded by seventy wolves," which is symbolic of the seventy (root) nations of the world.

Virtually every nation is anticipating the demise of the Jewish people and the destruction of Israel. It is only because the Jewish people are not sufficiently immersed in *Torah* study, that they are vulnerable to their enemies.

*Torah*: Regarding *Yitzchak's* quantification of *Yaakov*, "Hakol kol Yaakov v'hayadayim yidei Esav – the voice is the voice of *Yaakov* and the hands are the hands of *Esav*."

*Chazal*: This statement means that as long as the Jewish people utilize their "voice" as the "voice" of *Yaakov* (symbolic of *Torah* study) then they will not be subject to the hands of *Esav* (*Amalek*). Therefore, the Jewish people must engage sufficiently in *Torah* to be protected from all of their enemies and to ultimately merit redemption.

## **Aaron's Qualifying Characteristic as High Priest (from *Tetzaveh*)**

*Torah*: Regarding the *Choshen* (Breastplate of Judgment) that was worn by the High Priest, "And Aaron shall bear judgment of the Children of Israel on his heart..."

*Sforno*: "And Aaron shall bear judgment of the Children of Israel on his heart..." means, "Aaron should pray on behalf of the Jewish people so that they should be meritorious in judgment." It is the responsibility of the High Priest to pray on behalf of his generation that they should be protected and merit favorable judgment before G-d. Why did *Aaron* merit to have the Breastplate upon his heart?

*Torah*: When G-d appeared to *Moshe* at the burning bush, He had entered into a seven day dialogue with him. *Moshe* was told by G-d that he was to be the Redeemer of Israel. *Moshe* was obstinate in accepting this mission. *Moshe* resisted accepting the role of

Redeemer because he was concerned that it would slight his older brother Aaron. G-d told Moshe, to the contrary that when Aaron would be made aware that his brother was chosen to be the Redeemer, he would go out and greet him with “joy in his heart.”

*Chazal*: Because Aaron had “joy in his heart,” he merited to wear the Breastplate of Judgment upon his heart. Although Aaron was Moshe’s elder brother he did not have a trace of envy but rather he had joy for the good fortune which came upon Moshe. Because Aaron possessed such a pure heart, he merited that as High Priest, the Breastplate of Judgment should be worn upon his heart.

*Rav Y.Y Ruderman zt’l* (Baltimore *Rosh Ha’Yeshivah*): “Why do *Chazal* tell us that Aaron merited to wear the Breastplate on his heart because he was happy for his brother Moshe? If in fact Aaron was the spiritual equivalent of his brother Moshe, then he should have merited this vestment because of his special dimension of spirituality.” He answered, “From the words of *Chazal* we are able to understand that one’s innate special character traits are primary.”

However, one is able to understand why the *Torah* focuses on Aaron’s special heart in another way. The *Torah* reveals that the primary responsibility of the High Priest was to pray on behalf of the Jewish people. He needed to pray that G-d should render on their behalf a positive judgment. Unless the High Priest possessed a purity of heart, this level of concern for every Jew would not be possible. Therefore, the *Torah* quantifies Aaron through his purity of heart to qualify him as High Priest.

*Torah*: If a person kills inadvertently, he must flee to one of the cities of refuge that is designated by the *Torah* (*Aarei Miklot*). He must remain there until the passing of the High Priest.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Makkos*: “Why is the release of this individual from the city of refuge contingent on the passing of the High Priest?” The *Gemara* explains that if the High Priest would have prayed sufficiently, this tragedy would not have occurred. The Jewish people would have merited a level of Mercy that would have protected them from tragedy. Since the High Priest has a degree of culpability for the inadvertent killing, it is clear that he had failed. He failed because his heart was not pure enough to be sensitive for the need of every Jew. It is not enough for the High Priest to be a devoutly righteous person, he requires a special purity of heart.

It is interesting to note that if a new High Priest was installed after the inadvertent murder had taken place, but before the verdict of the court, the murderer must remain confined to the city of refuge until the passing of the new High Priest.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Makkos*: “If the tragedy had already occurred before the new High Priest was installed, what is his culpability?” The *Gemara* answers, “The culpability of the new High Priest is attributed to a failing of his. He could have prayed that the defendant in question should have been found innocent rather than guilty. The incarceration of this person is attributed to the failing of the High Priest, that he did not evoke sufficient Mercy from G-d. Therefore, the inadvertent murder must remain in the city of refuge until the passing of the new High Priest.”

Aaron was the first and most special High Priest. His heart was uniquely pure. He thus had a special love for every Jew. He was dedicated to the welfare of the Jewish people. A prerequisite for a High Priest to succeed in his role is to reflect the characteristic of his forbearer.

