HATSORI: The Perfume of the Messiah

□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□ :□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□

A few days ago we talked about the Qetoret, the incense that used to be offered daily in the Bet-haMiqdash, the Temple of Jerusalem (see here). We also said that although the Tora and the Sages mentioned the eleven elements used in the Qetoret, most of them plants, it is difficult to identify them today, either because some of these plants disappeared, or because we are not sure of their identity. This problem is better understood when we remember that in the production of the Qetoret there was "professional secrecy" (as happens, for example, in the contemporary industrial world with many products).

We will see today the first element of the Qetoret. In the Tora it is called "nataf", which means drop or dripping (we will soon understand why), and in Rabbinic Hebrew it is known by the name of the final product: the TSORI.

Rabbi Portaleone in his book Shilte haGuibborim describes extensively the details of the identification of the TSORI: the tree; where it was grown; the imitations of this tree, and what part of the tree was used to produce the Tsori.
I will mention now the opinion of most Rabbis and prestigious researchers, such as the Israeli scientist Yehuda Feliks (1922-2005) from Bar Ilan University, an expert in the subject of biblical and talmudic flora and fauna.

THE TREE
The Tsori was obtained from the Afarsemon tree, which is NOT the Persimmon tree or fruit cultivated nowadays in Israel. This tree, about a meter high, grew exclusively in the

land of Israel, in the valley of Jericho and south of the Dead Sea (‘En Gedi). The Afarsemon tree was found also in Egypt, and according to Rabbi Portaleone it was brought there by the sons of Ya’aqob (□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□), as an exotic gift to please the mysterious Egyptian monarch (who ended up being Yosef).

At the time of the destruction of the Bet haMiqdash (68 of the common era) the Romans, who heard of this wonderful tree and its importance to the Jews, tried to make the tree disappear from Israel and cultivate it in Rome. The Roman historian Pilinio the Old testifies that the Jews defended this tree with their lives, because without this tree the Qetoret could not be elaborated. The Romans valued this famous tree so much that it was exhibited at Tito’s triumphal march in the Colosseum, along with other precious spoils of war (it was the first and last time in the history of Rome that a tree appeared in a March of Triumph).

MANUFACTURING THE TSORI

Rabbi Portaleone analyzes all the theories as to which part of the tree was used to produce the Tsori, even an opinion that according to Maimonides the Tsori was elaborated out of the wood of the tree, not its sap. But in the end he concludes with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (which we Sephardic Jews know by heart because we read it three times a day): the Tsori, which is also a combustible substance (in Hebrew: □□□) was obtained from the resin (sap) of the tree, which the Rabbis called ‘atse haquetaf. Trees produce resin when they are “injured”, to heal or regenerate their wood. For the tree to drip its resin (□□□) an incision has the be made. And in this particular tree the incision could not be made with metal, because it killed the tree, but with a sharp glass. Other professional secrets included the following points: at what period of the year was the incision made? How many incisions, and in which parts were those incisions made? The trunk, or the branches? How was the resin collected and how was it preserved, so that it does not get ruined? Etc.

SHEMEN AFARSEMON

It seems to me then that with the resin of this tree an exotic perfume called Shemen Afarsemon was also made (my doubt persists: are the “Tsori” and “Shemen Afarsemon” two different products obtained from the same sap, or one product with two different names?).

The Afarsemon perfume (or balsam, oil, or extract) was so typical of the land of Israel that our sages formulated a specific special blessing for it: “Blessed are You HaShem … Creator of the perfume of our Land” (□□□□□ □□□ □□□□)

This precious fragrance was sold to the royalty and aristocracy of the Middle East, and it was one of the most important commercial products for export that sustained the Israeli economy during the times of the Bet haMiqdash. There are testimonies that the Phoenicians of Tire and Sidon paid for this perfume, literally, its weight in gold. This beautiful balsam was also used to anoint the Kings of Israel in the official act of coronation. And this oil, “Shemen Afarsemon” will be used to officially crown the Messiah. The Hebrew word “mashiah” literally means “anointed” (many people wrongly believe that “mashiah” means “savior”!), indicating precisely to this official anointing / coronation ceremony of the melekh hamashiah, the anointed King, descendant of David haMelekh. May we see him coming □“□□□□ .

□□□□ □□□

The Discovery of the Century?

See [this fascinating article from the NYT](#) , 1989, claiming that a jug with Afarsemon balsam was discovered in one of Israel’s cave, near the Dead Sea.