

~INCENSE (505)

[Hebrew, *qa-tar'*, Greek, *thy-mi'a-ma*]

.. Significance

.. Not Burned By Christians

• A compound of aromatic gums and balsams that will burn slowly, giving off a fragrant aroma. The Hebrew words *qeto'reth* and *qetoh-rah'* are from the root *qa-tar'*, meaning, make sacrificial smoke. The equivalent in the Christian Greek Scriptures is *thy-mi'a-ma*.

• The sacred incense prescribed for use in the wilderness tabernacle was made of costly materials that the congregation contributed.

• And Yehowah proceeded to speak to Moses, saying; (Exodus 25:1)

• Speak to the sons of Israel, that they may take up a contribution for me; From every man whose heart incites him you people are to take up the contribution of mine. (Exodus 25:2)

• Oil for the luminary, balsam oil for the anointing oil and for perfumed **incense**. (Exodus 25:6)

• And Moses went on to say to the entire assembly of the sons of Israel; This is the word that Yehowah has commanded, saying; (Exodus 35:4)

• From among yourselves take up a contribution for Yehowah. Let every willing-hearted one bring it as Yehowah's contribution, namely, gold and silver and copper. (Exodus 35:5)

• And oil for the luminary and balsam oil for the anointing oil and for the perfumed **incense**. (Exodus 35:8)

• And the chieftains brought onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and the breastpiece. (Exodus 35:27)

• And the balsam oil and the oil for illumination and for the anointing oil and for the perfumed **incense**. (Exodus 35:28)

• Every man and woman whose hearts incited them to bring

something for all the work that Yehowah had commanded to make by means of Moses did so, the sons of Israel brought a voluntary offering to Yehowah. (**Exodus 35:29**)

- In giving the divine formula for this fourfold mixture, Yehowah said to Moses; Take to yourself perfumes, stacte drops and onycha and perfumed galbanum and pure frank**incense**.
- There should be the same portion of each. And you must make it into an **incense**, a spice mixture, the work of an ointment maker, salted, pure, something holy.
- And you must pound some of it into fine powder and put some of it before the Testimony in the tent of meeting, where I shall present myself to you.
- It should be most holy to you people. Then, to impress upon them the exclusiveness and holiness of the **incense**, Yehowah added:
- And Yehowah went on to say to Moses; Take to yourself perfumes, stacte drops and onycha and perfumed galbanum and pure frank**incense**. There should be the same portion of each. (**Exodus 30:34**)
- And you must make it into an **incense**, a spice mixture, the work of an ointment maker, salted, pure, something holy. (**Exodus 30:35**)
- And you must pound some of it into fine powder and put some of it before the Testimony in the tent of meeting, where I shall present myself to you. It should be most holy to you people. (**Exodus 30:36**)
- And the **incense** that you will make with this composition, you must not make for yourselves. For you it is to continue as something holy to Yehowah. (**Exodus 30:37**)
- Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its smell must be cut off from his people. (**Exodus 30:38**)
- He made additionally the holy anointing oil and the pure, perfumed **incense**, the work of an ointment maker. (**Exodus 37:29**)

- At a later time the rabbinic Jews added other ingredients to the temple **incense**, Josephus saying it was made of 13 sweet-smelling spices. [The Jewish War, V, 218, v, 5]
- According to **Maimonides**, some of these extra items included amber, cassia, cinnamon, myrrh, saffron, and spikenard.
- At the West end of the Holy compartment of the tabernacle, next to the curtain dividing it off from the Most Holy, was located the altar of **incense**.
- And you must make an altar as a place for burning **incense**, out of acacia wood you will make it. (**Exodus 30:1**)
- He now made the altar of **incense** out of acacia wood. A cubit was its length and a cubit its width, it being foursquare, and two cubits was its height. Its horns proceeded out of it. (**Exodus 37:25**)
- And you must put the golden altar for **incense** before the ark of the testimony and put the screen of the entrance for the tabernacle in place. (**Exodus 40:5**)
- He next placed the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the curtain. (**Exodus 40:26**)
- That he might make perfumed **incense** smoke upon it, just as Yehowah had commanded Moses. (**Exodus 40:27**)
- There was also a similar **incense** altar in Solomon's temple.
- And for the **incense** altar refined gold by weight and for the representation of the chariot, namely, the cherubs of gold for spreading their wings out and screening over the ark of the covenant of Yehowah. (**1 Chronicles 28:18**)
- Here I am building a house to the name of Yehowah my God to sanctify it to him, to burn perfumed **incense** before him, with the constant layer bread and burnt offerings in the morning and in the evening, on the Sabbaths and on the new moons and at the festival seasons of Yehowah our God. To time indefinite this will be upon Israel. (**2 Chronicles 2:4**)

- Upon these altars, every morning and evening the sacred **incense** was burned.
- And Aaron must make perfumed **incense** smoke upon it. Morning by morning, when he dresses the lamps, he will make it smoke. (**Exodus 30:7**)
- And when Aaron lights up the lamps between the two evenings, he will make it smoke. It is an **incense** constantly before Yehowah during your generations. (**Exodus 30:8**)
- And they are making burnt offerings smoke to Yehowah morning by morning and evening by evening and also perfumed **incense**, and the layers of bread are upon the table of pure gold, and there are the golden lampstand and its lamps to light up evening by evening, because we are keeping the obligation to Yehowah our God, but you yourselves have left him. (**2 Chronicles 13:11**)
- Once a year on the Day of Atonement coals from the altar were taken in a censer, or fire holder, together with two handfuls of **incense**, into the Most Holy, where the incense was made to smoke before the mercy seat of the ark of the testimony.
- And he must take the fire holder full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before Yehowah, and the hollows of both his hands full of fine perfumed **incense**, and he must bring them inside the curtain. (**Leviticus 16:12**)
- He must also put the **incense** upon the fire before Yehowah, and the cloud of the **incense** must overspread the Ark cover, which is upon the Testimony, that he may not die. (**Leviticus 16:13**)
- High Priest Aaron initially offered the **incense** upon the altar.
- And Aaron must make perfumed **incense** smoke upon it. Morning by morning, when he dresses the lamps, he will make it smoke. (**Exodus 30:7**)
- However, his son Eleazar was given oversight of the **incense** and other tabernacle items.
- And the oversight of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is over the oil of the luminary and the perfumed **incense** and the constant grain offering and the anointing oil, the oversight of all

the tabernacle and all that is in it, namely, the holy place and its utensils. (**Numbers 4:16**)

- It appears that the burning of **incense**, except on the Day of Atonement, was not restricted to the High Priest, as underpriest Zechariah, father of John the Baptizer, is mentioned as handling this service.
- Now as he was acting as priest in the assignment of his division before God. (**Luke 1:8**)
- According to the solemn practice of the priestly office it became his turn to offer **incense** when he entered into the sanctuary of Yehowah. (**Luke 1:9**)
- And all the multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of offering **incense**. (**Luke 1:10**)
- To him Yehowah's angel appeared, standing at the right side of the **incense** altar. (**Luke 1:11**)
- Soon after the tabernacle service began to function, Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu were struck dead by Yehowah for attempting to offer up **incense** with **illegitimate fire**.
- Later on Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took up and brought each one his fire holder and put fire in them and placed **incense** upon it, and they began offering before Yehowah **illegitimate fire**, which he had not prescribed for them. (**Leviticus 10:1**)
- At this a fire came out from before Yehowah and consumed them, so that they died before Yehowah. (**Leviticus 10:2**)
- You must not offer upon it **illegitimate incense** or a burnt offering or a grain offering, and you must not pour a drink offering upon it. (**Exodus 30:9**)
- Later, Korah and 250 others, all Levites but not of the priestly line, rebelled against the Aaronic priesthood. As a test they were instructed by Moses to take fire holders and burn **incense** at the tabernacle entrance so that Yehowah might indicate whether he accepted them as his priests. The group perished while in the act, their fire holders in hand.

- Do this. Take fire holders for yourselves, Korah and his entire assembly. (**Numbers 16:6**)
- And put fire in them and place **incense** upon them before Yehowah tomorrow, and it must occur that the man whom Yehowah will choose, he is the holy one. That is enough of you, you sons of Levi! (**Numbers 16:7**)
- Then Moses said to Korah; You and all your assembly, be present before Yehowah, you and they and Aaron, tomorrow. (**Numbers 16:16**)
- And take each one his fire holder, and you men must put **incense** upon them and present each one his fire holder before Yehowah, two hundred and fifty fire holders, and you and Aaron each his fire holder. (**Numbers 16:17**)
- So they took each one his fire holder and put fire upon them and placed **incense** upon them and stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting together with Moses and Aaron. (**Numbers 16:18**)
- And a fire came out from Yehowah and proceeded to consume the two hundred and fifty men offering the **incense**. (**Numbers 16:35**)
- Yehowah now spoke to Moses, saying; (**Numbers 16:36**)
- Say to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest that he should take up the fire holders from within the conflagration, and you scatter the fire over there, for they are holy. (**Numbers 16:37**)
- Even the fire holders of these men who sinned against their own souls. And they must make them into thin metal plates as an overlaying for the altar, because they presented them before Yehowah, so that they became holy, and they should serve as a sign to the sons of Israel. (**Numbers 16:38**)
- Accordingly Eleazar the priest took the copper fire holders, which those who had been burned up had presented, and they proceeded to beat them out into an overlaying for the altar. (**Numbers 16:39**)
- As a memorial for the sons of Israel, to the end that no strange man who is not of the offspring of Aaron should come near to

make **incense** smoke before Yehowah, and no one might become like Korah and his assembly, just as Yehowah had spoken to him by means of Moses. (**Numbers 16:40**)

- So, too, King Uzziah was stricken with leprosy when he presumptuously attempted to burn **incense** in the temple.
- However, as soon as he was strong, his heart became haughty even to the point of causing ruin, so that he acted unfaithfully against Yehowah his God and came into the temple of Yehowah to burn **incense** upon the altar of incense. (**2 Chronicles 26:16**)
- Immediately Azariah the priest and with him priests of Yehowah, eighty valiant men, came in after him. (**2 Chronicles 26:17**)
- Then they stood up against Uzziah the king and said to him; It is not your business, O Uzziah, to burn **incense** to Yehowah, but it is the business of the priests the sons of Aaron, the ones sanctified, to burn incense. Go out from the sanctuary, for you have acted unfaithfully, and it is not for any glory to you on the part of Yehowah God. (**2 Chronicles 26:18**)
- But Uzziah became enraged while in his hand there was a censer for burning **incense**, and, during his rage against the priests, leprosy itself flashed up in his forehead before the priests in the house of Yehowah beside the altar of **incense**. (**2 Chronicles 26:19**)
- When Azariah the chief priest and all the priests turned toward him, why, there he was stricken with leprosy in his forehead! So they excitedly began to remove him from there, and he himself also hastened to go out, because Yehowah had smitten him. (**2 Chronicles 26:20**)
- And Uzziah the king continued to be a leper until the day of his death, and he kept dwelling in a house exempt from duties, as a leper, for he had been severed from the house of Yehowah, while Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. (**2 Chronicles 26:21**)

See Also ABIHU

- As time went on, the nation of Israel became so negligent in the prescribed worship of Yehowah that they closed the temple and burned **incense** on other altars.
- They also closed the doors of the porch and kept the lamps extinguished, and **incense** they did not burn, and burnt sacrifice they did not offer up in the holy place to the God of Israel. (2 **Chronicles 29:7**)
- Then they rose up and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the **incense** altars they removed and then threw them into the torrent valley of Kidron. (2 **Chronicles 30:14**)
- Worse than that, they burned **incense** to other gods before whom they prostituted themselves, and in other ways they desecrated the holy incense, all of which was detestable in Yehowah's sight.
- So I went in and began to see, and, look! There was every representation of creeping things and loathsome beasts, and all the dungy idols of the house of Israel, the carving being upon the wall all round about. (**Ezekiel 8:10**)
- And seventy men of the elderly ones of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing in among them, were standing before them, each one with his censer in his hand, and the perfume of the cloud of the **incense** was ascending. (**Ezekiel 8:11**)
- And you would take your beautiful articles from my gold and from my silver that I had given to you and you would make for yourself images of a male and prostitute yourself with them. (**Ezekiel 16:17**)
- And you would take your embroidered garments and cover them, and my oil and my **incense** you would actually put before them. (**Ezekiel 16:18**)
- And Yehowah went on to say to me; Son Of Man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah and tell them their detestable things? (**Ezekiel 23:36**)
- And you sat down upon a glorious couch, with a table set in order before it, and my **incense** and my oil you put upon it. (**Ezekiel 23:41**)

- Stop bringing in any more valueless grain offerings. **Incense**, it is something detestable to me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of a convention, I cannot put up with the use of uncanny power along with the solemn assembly. (**Isaiah 1:13**)

· Significance

- The Law covenant had a shadow of better things to come.
- For since the Law has a **shadow of the good things to come**, but not the very substance of the things, men can never with the same sacrifices from year to year which they offer continually make those who approach perfect. (**Hebrews 10:1**)
- And it seems that the burning of **incense** under that arrangement represented the acceptable prayers of God's faithful servants. The psalmist declared, May my **prayer be prepared as incense** before you Yehowah
- May my **prayer be prepared as incense** before you, the raising up of my palms as the evening grain offering. (**Psalms 141:2**)
- Likewise, the highly symbolic book of Revelation describes those around God's heavenly throne as having, golden bowls that were full of **incense**, and the **incense means the prayers of the holy ones**.
- And when he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls that were full of **incense**, and the **incense means the prayers of the holy ones**. (**Revelation 5:8**)
- And another angel arrived and stood at the altar, having a golden **incense** vessel, and a large quantity of **incense** was given him to offer it **with the prayers of all the holy ones** upon the golden altar that was before the throne. (**Revelation 8:3**)
- And the smoke of the **incense** ascended from the hand of the angel with the **prayers of the holy ones** before God. (**Revelation 8:4**)
- In several respects the burning **incense** served as a fitting symbol of the **prayers of the holy ones** that are offered up.

- In the days of his flesh **Christ offered up supplications** and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear. (**Hebrews 5:7**)
- **Night and day.**
- While **night and day** we make more than **extraordinary supplications** to see your faces and to make good the things that are lacking about your faith? (**1 Thessalonians 3:10**)
- **Pleasant to Yehowah.**
- The sacrifice of the wicked ones is something detestable to Yehowah, but the **prayer of the upright ones is a pleasure** to him. (**Proverbs 15:8**)
- **Incense**, of course, could **not make the prayers of false worshipers acceptable to God.**
- He that is **turning his ear away** from hearing the Law, **even his prayer is something detestable.** (**Proverbs 28:9**)
- They are the ones devouring the houses of the widows and for a pretext making long prayers, these will receive a heavier judgment. (**Mark 12:40**)
- **On the other hand, the prayers of a righteous one are effectual.**
- Therefore openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may get healed. **A righteous man's supplication**, when it is at work, **has much force.** (**James 5:16**)
- So, too, when a plague from God broke out, Aaron quickly put the **incense** on and began making atonement for the people.
- After that Moses said to Aaron; Take the fire holder and put fire from upon the altar in it and put on **incense** and go to the assembly in a hurry and make atonement for them, because the indignation has gone out from the face of Yehowah. The plague has started! (**Numbers 16:46**)
- Aaron at once took it, just as Moses had spoken, and went running into the midst of the congregation, and, look! The

plague had started among the people. So he put the **incense** on and began making atonement for the people. (**Numbers 16:47**)

- And he kept standing between the dead and the living. Eventually the scourge was stopped. (**Numbers 16:48**)

• Not Burned By Christians

- Though **incense** is burned today in certain religions of Christendom, as also in Buddhist temples, we find no basis in Scripture for such practice by Christians. Censers are not listed among church vessels for the **First Four Centuries of the Common Era**, and not until Gregory the Great, latter part of the **Sixth Century**, is there clear evidence of incense being used in church services. Obviously, this is because with the coming of Christ and the nailing of the Law covenant and its regulations to the torture stake
- And blotted out the handwritten document against us, which consisted of decrees and which was in opposition to us, and He has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the torture stake. (**Colossians 2:14**)
- And especially after the temple and its Aaronic priesthood were completely removed, the burning of **incense** in the worship of God ceased. No authorization for its use in the Christian congregation was given, and early Christians, like the Jews, never individually burned **incense** for religious purposes.
- Early Christians also refused to burn **incense** in honor of the emperor, even though it cost them their lives. As **Daniel P. Mannix** observes: **Very few of the Christians recanted, although an altar with a fire burning on it was generally kept in the arena for their convenience.**
- All a prisoner had to do was scatter a pinch of **incense** on the flame and he was given a Certificate of Sacrifice and turned free. It was also carefully explained to him that he was not worshiping the emperor, merely acknowledging the divine character of the emperor as head of the Roman state. Still, almost no Christians availed themselves of the chance to escape. [**Those About to Die**, 1958, p. 137]
- **Tertullian Second and Third Centuries C.E.**, says that Christians would not even engage in the **incense** trade. [**On Idolatry**, chap. XI] This, however, is not the case with the **incense** merchants doing business with symbolic Babylon the Great.

- **Also, the traveling merchants of the earth are weeping and mourning over her, because there is no one to buy their full stock anymore. (Revelation 18:11)**
- **Also cinnamon and Indian spice and **incense** and **perfumed oil** and **frankincense** and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and horses and coaches and slaves and human souls. (Revelation 18:13)**