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Incense in the Most Holy Place
16: 11-12

Incense in the Most Holy Place DIG: Why did the high priest prepare a bull to be sacrificed? Why was it so necessary for the high priest to be protected? Had he done anything wrong? What did the high priest bring with him behind the veil and into the Most Holy Place?

REFLECT: Believers are not guaranteed physical protection from God. Fox's Book of Martyrs describes the history of those who have died for their faith. But our eternal security in the Lord is protected and secured. How can you explain this to another believer or unbeliever?

The high priest dared not enter the Most Holy Place unless he bore some means of protection.

A bull was prepared for a purification offering (16:11): The mitzvot of **Leviticus 4:3-21** teach us that **the high priest's purification offering** was to be **a bull** on **the Day of Atonements** (**to see link click Cq – The Day of Atonements**). **Aaron** was **to present the bull of the purification offering for himself.** Nothing was actually placed on **the bronze altar** at this point. The Hebrew verb *to offer* here indicates that **the bull** was **slaughtered** in preparation for the sacrifice. **He** would **make atonement for himself and his household; he** was **to slaughter the bull of the purification offering which** was **for himself.** Here again, the text anticipates the purpose of **the purification offering** in advance of **its** actual performance. The actual **sacrifice** is described later in the process (see **Cw – The Cleanser Must be Made Clean**).



The high priest entered behind the veil with incense (16:12-13): When **the high priest** passed through **the inner veil** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fq – The Inner Veil of the Sanctuary: That is Christ, His Body**) and entered into **the Most Holy Place**, **his** first task was to ignite two handfuls of **incense** in order to create **a cloud** of smoke. The prescription for blending this **incense** is provided in **Exodus 30:34-38**. The same blend was used for the daily **incense offering**, ordained in **Exodus 30:26**. **The rabbinic tradition explains that for the rites of purification on Yom Kippur, the incense was ground more finely than usual.**

Unlike **the strange fire** of **Nadab and Abihu** (see **Bh – The Death of Nadab and Abihu**), **Aaron** was instructed by **God to take a censer full of burning coals from the bronze altar before ADONAI, and with his hands full of ground, fragrant incense, bring it inside the inner veil. He is to put the incense on the fire before ADONAI, so that the cloud from the incense will cover the Mercy Seat** (see **Exodus Fs – The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**) **which is over the Ark of the Covenant** (see **Exodus Fr – The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**)**.**

We recall that when **Moshe** entered **the Sh'khinah glory** on Mount Sinai, **he** entered the presence of **YHVH**. **No one can see God and live (Exodus 33:20)**. For this reason, **the LORD** was hidden within the cloud. **The** cloud obscured the face of **ADONAI**, thereby protecting **Moses**. Entering behind **the inner veil** was fraught with danger. **Ha'Shem** was behind **the veil**. **The anointed priest** dares not enter therein unless **he** bore some means of **protection**. Before entering with **the blood**, **he** entered with **incense in order that he not die.** In **Numbers 17:11-13**, we read that **Moshe** instructed **Aaron** to **take his fire pan, put fire**

from the bronze altar in it, lay incense on it, and hurry with it to the assembly to make atonement for them, and protect **the Israelites** from **a plague** sent against **them** by **YHVH**, who had become enraged at the rebellion of **Korah**. **Aaron** stood with **the burning incense between the dead and the living**, and **the plague stopped**.

In the ritual of **Yom Kippur**, **the high priest** drew extremely close to **God's** throne in **the Most Holy Place** and was therefore in grave danger – even though **he** had committed no wrongdoing and was in **the Most Holy Place** according to **Ha'Shem's** instructions. All who would stand in **His** presence were in need of **protection** in order to avert **His** wrath.[280]

The priest took a long shovel and scooped **burning coals** from **the bronze altar** (see **Exodus Fa – Build Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**) to be brought into **the Most Holy Place**. In a ladle **he** would place two handfuls of finely ground **incense**. With the shovel and ladle in **his** hands, **he** would enter **the Most Holy Place**. Once inside, **he** would pour **the incense** onto **the coals**. A thick **cloud** of smoke would appear and fill **it**. **The cloud** of **incense** served to conceal in **ADONAI** from **the high priest** just as **the cloud** on Mount Sinai had concealed **the LORD** from **Moses**. **Apparently, there was an argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as to whether the incense should be ignited *before* the high priest passed through the veil or *after* he passed through the veil. The following excerpt from the Talmud relates the argument.**

Our rabbis taught, "There was a Sadducean high priest who had ignited the incense *before* passing through the inner veil and entered the Most Holy Place. He left rejoicing. As he emerged from the Temple, his father met him and rebuked him saying, "My son, although we are Sadducees, we should respect the opinion of the Pharisees." The son replied, "All my life I was bothered by the verse that says: For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. I always wondered when I would have the opportunity to fulfill that verse the way I interpreted it. Now that the opportunity has finally come to me, should I not have it fulfilled?" It was reported that it took only a few days until he died and was thrown on the dung heap and worms came out from his nose. Some say, "He was smitten as he came out of the Most Holy Place." For Rabbi Chiya taught, "Some sort of noise was heard in the Temple Court, because an angel had come and struck him face down. Some of the priests came in and they found the imprint as of a calf's hoof on his shoulder (Yoma 19b quoting Leviticus

16:2).

After pouring the **incense** over the coals with **his** hands,
the high priest took the ladle and withdrew from **the Most Holy Place**.[281]

As believers, we are not guaranteed physical **protection** in this world. Many a believer has been martyred for their faith, and that is still a fact in today's world more than ever. But we are **protected** from hell and eternal separation from **ADONAI** when we accept **Yeshua** as our **Lord and Savior**. At the moment of salvation **God** rescues us from the kingdom of darkness and makes us alive in **Messiah**. **YHVH seals** us and **baptizes us with the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** into **the Body of Messiah. He** also transfers the **righteousness** of **Messiah** to us by faith, which is apart from works and adopts us into **His** family (see **The Life of Christ Bw – What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). At **His** death, **the inner veil** of the Sanctuary was torn in to (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lw – Accompanying Signs of Jesus' Death**), and from that time onward those who believe in **Him** need not fear **Him** any longer. We are eternally secure in **Him** (see **The Life of Chris Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**).

This is *our* **protection**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are our Almighty **Father**! **You** are infinitely wise, full of chesed – steadfast loving kindness! **You** are the powerful protector of **Your** children and **You** are also full of wrath for those who persist in evil. **Father, Your** love is unbelievably gracious, for **You** knew the very painful and costly price of death that **Yeshua** would have to pay for redemption and yet with great and tender mercy **You** allowed **Yeshua** to pay **sin's** painful penalty of death for us. **We have an Intercessor with the Father – the righteous Messiah Yeshua. He is the atonement for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world (First John 2:1c-2). Your** love was not just an intellectual plan, but **Your** love went far beyond the mere knowledge, for **You** moved into action and **Messiah** suffered a bloody and excruciating death for all who would choose to love and follow **Him** as **Lord** and **Savior**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation (Romans 10:9-10).***

*What a wonderful **Father, Son** and **Holy Ruach You** are to bless us with the gift of*

salvation by paying our penalty and by removing our ***sins as far as east is from the west. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so ADONAI has compassion on those who fear Him (Ps 103:11-13).***

It is such a great privilege to have ***the Ruach Ha'Kodesh*** *living within me.* ***After you heard the message of truth – the Good News of your salvation – and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha'Kodesh (Ephesians 1:13).*** *How awesome is* ***God's*** *precious gift of* ***righteousness*** *that brings* ***the Holy Ruach*** *inside of me and opened the door of heaven to me as well.* ***And if the Ruach of the One who raised Yeshua from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Ruach who dwells in you (Romans 8:11). Father,*** *help me to live my life in humble worship of* ***Your*** *majesty and of* ***Your*** *gracious gifts. Peace and joy in Heaven will endure thru all eternity. I want to focus my eyes not on my momentary trails, but look expectantly to living with* ***You*** *in heaven and gifting* ***You*** *with my life full of love for* ***You*** *in all I think, say and do.* ***For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).*** *I love* ***You****! In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection! Amen*