

INCLUSIVENESS

by Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah in this week's parsha discusses the composition of the rare and fragrant incense that was offered daily on the golden altar in the mishkan and later in the Temple. The exact formulation of the incense is not given - i.e. the amount of each of the ingredients relative to the entire amount of incense produced - but some of the thirteen different spices and herbs described later in the Talmud as being the components of the Temple incense are mentioned in the parsha.

Among the ingredients mentioned is chelbanah - usually translated in English as being galbanum. This spice was one that did not emit a pleasant odor. This may have been true when used alone but apparently when it was combined with the other pleasant smelling spices, the total effect was intoxicatingly wonderful and very pleasant aromatically. The Talmud saw in this use of chelbanah in the incense formulation a moral and social lesson for all of Israel and for all time.

The Talmud teaches us that any public fast day that does not include "the sinners of Israel" in its program of prayer and fasting is deficient in its role. Rashi here in the parsha emphasizes that point. Rashi states that they are not to be treated "lightly" and that they are to be included and "counted with us."

The Talmud certainly indicates with this statement that we are to be inclusive of Jews who are sinners, who do not act as we wish them to behave and with whom we are therefore loath to associate. This attitude of exclusion is unfortunately the usual pattern of behavior in our religious world where the tendency to greater and greater exclusivity amongst Jews has become the accepted rule of our different societies.

Nevertheless, there has been great progress in attempting to reach out to the "sinners of Israel" and to expose them to our religious and national agenda. I speak not only of the continuing accomplishments of the institutions that have headed Jewish outreach for the past number of decades, but of new initiatives to help unite the Jewish people and restore the traditions of Judaism to Jews who, through no immediate fault of their own, are estranged or ignorant of their rich heritage.

Megillat Esther was read for the first time in a number of kibbutzim this Purim. Jewish education lectures are being given in places where previously Judaism was not allowed to conflict with the dogmas and religion of Marxism. Changing someone else's lifestyle in midstream is difficult to accomplish. But bringing people who evidently wish to be part of the Jewish people, to prayer, to

observe fast days and to celebrate feast days without preconditions and maximum demands, and having patience and true concern while doing this, is possible and very necessary.

A united Jewish people, with all of the internal differences that will always remain within our society, is seen to be equal to the great formulation of the incense in the Temple. That formulation produced a marvelous fragrance and engendered joy. Our attempts to unite the Jewish people are also guaranteed to produce great joy and positive purpose for all of Israel.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com

Text Copyright © 2007 by [Rabbi Berel Wein](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**