

מור – Myrrh – Commiphora Myrrha

The Bitter, Detoxifying, Amalek-Eliminating Myrrh

Sweet smelling trees play an important role in the Scroll of Esther. In fact, the two main heroes of the Purim story are compared respectively to myrrh and myrtle. Arizal teaches that the organ of the month of Adar is the nostril (Arizal, *Etz Chaim, Rosh Hashana* 4). Indeed, it is the sense of smell that saved the Jewish people in the time of Mordechai and Esther, who are called *Mor v'Hadas* – 'Myrrh and Myrtle' – two primary sources of fragrance. Myrrh is a resin, or sap-like substance, from a tree – common in Africa and the Middle East – distinctive for its white flowers and knotted trunk. The Hebrew word מֹר/*mor* – 'myrrh' is from the word מַר/*mar* – bitter. Myrrh is one of the bitterest herbs I've ever tasted. In Chinese medicine, we learn that each kind of taste has a particular medicinal property. The bitter flavor has the ability to expel toxins and cleanse the body through its anti-biotic, anti-viral and detoxifying properties. This explains why the queen candidates for Ahasverush's harem had to soak in myrrh-baths before coming before the king. "When each maiden's turn came to go to king Ahasverush at the end of the 12 months' treatment prescribed for the women: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and women's cosmetics" (*Megillat Esther* 2:12). Malbim explains that the oil of myrrh removes unnecessary body hair, which implies that we should remove the desire for extras during the six winter months. Moreover, the detoxifying property of myrrh corresponds to Mordechai who had the ability to remove the wicked Haman from the Amalekite people.



The Eleven Holy Aromatics Overcoming the Eleven Unholy Husks

Mordechai is associated with the myrrh – one of the eleven spices of the *ketoret* (incense), which had the power to counteract the plague of death, "Aharon took [the fire-pan]... He put the incense in it, and it atoned for the people. He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was checked" (*Bamidbar* 17:12-13). Mordechai together with Esther likewise had the power to overcome Haman's evil death-decree.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת חולין דף קלט/ב מרדכי מן התורה מנין דכתיב מר דרור ומתרגמין מירא דכיא:
Where is Mordechai mentioned in the Torah? "Pure myrrh" translates as "*mira dechaya*" [which sounds similar to Mor dechai] (*Shemot* 30:23); (*Babylonian Talmud, Chulin* 139b).

Why is Mordechai associated specifically with the incense? Whereas there are ten dimensions of holiness, there are eleven dimensions of un-holiness from the other side, corresponding to Haman and his ten sons. Therefore, the incense contained eleven aromatics, in order to counteract the eleven impure forces in the world. The eleven aromatics of the incense had the power to purify and expel the eleven unholy husks of the other side. The reason why there are eleven powers of impurity while only ten powers of holiness, is that everything has a life-sustaining holy light that keeps it in existence. Regarding the dimension of holiness, this light is absorbed into the ten sefirot and so does not count as an element unto itself. In contrast regarding the dimension of unholiness (the *sitra achra*), the life-sustaining holy light does not absorb into the ten impure sefirot, and so constitute a presence unto itself – the eleventh (Maor V'Shemesh, *Remzei Purim* based on Arizal, *Sha'ar Hapesukim, Parashat Ki Tavo*).

Transforming the Blessing of Haman

Myrrh is the first spice mentioned in the anointing oil:

ספר שמות פרק ל (כג) וְאַתָּה קַח לָךְ בְּשָׂמִים רָאשׁ מֵרְדְּרוֹר הַיָּמֵשׁ מְאֹד...

“And you, take for yourself spices of the finest sort: of pure myrrh five hundred [shekel weights]” (*Shemot* 30:23).

Why is myrrh called רְדְּרוֹר/*mor dror* – ‘pure or free myrrh’? When the blood of the body turns into breast milk, it represents the transformation of *din* (judgment) to *chesed* (loving-kindness). Likewise, myrrh, which means bitter corresponds to judgment yet when it is transformed to become purified chesed, it is called רְדְּרוֹר/*dror* – ‘pure.’ Mordechai is compared specifically to *mor dror* – ‘pure myrrh’ because he was able to transform and sweeten the holy spark of Haman with which he troubled Israel. Although the belongings of the Amalekite people generally is forbidden for a Jew because their holy sparks are tied up and unavailable, “Esther placed Mordechai in charge of Haman’s estate” (*Megillat Esther* 8:2), because of Mordechai had the power to extract and transform the spark of Haman buried deeply within the depths of impurity (*Sefer Panim Yafot, Shemot* 30:23).

Mystical Divine Recipe Connecting Heaven & Earth

Although, according to the halacha to Moshe from Sinai, myrrh is one of the eleven spices in the Temple incense, it is not mentioned directly in the Torah verse describing the incense:

ספר שמות פרק ל (לד) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה קַח לָךְ סָמִים נְטֹף וְשִׁחֲלֹת וְחִלְבֵּנָה סָמִים וְלִבְנָה זָכָה בַד בְּבַד יְהוָה:

“G-d said to Moshe: Take for yourself aromatics such as balsam, onycha and galbanum, aromatics and pure frankincense they shall be of equal weight” (*Shemot* 30:34).

Only four of the incense aromatics are mentioned directly. Yet the word “aromatics” is mentioned twice in the Torah verse. Since it is in the plural form, the first “aromatics” must refer to a minimum of two spices. Thus, there are five spices including the three first spices mentioned by name. The word “aromatics” mentioned a second time refers to a similar number of spices as those already mentioned, making it ten. When we include the frankincense mentioned in the end, it adds up to eleven spices (Rashi, *Shemot* 30:34). Perhaps myrrh was not mentioned directly in the incense because it increases the power of the other incense ingredients. Thus, the unifying quality of myrrh reflects the inter-connectivity and harmony of the incense. The Hebrew word for incense, *ketoret*, is related to the word *kesher*, meaning a ‘bind’ or ‘knot.’ Myrrh helps imbue the incense with its ethereal unified essence that connect heaven and earth.

Myrrh & Frankincense – Elevating the Vital and Vegetative Soul

The Jewish people in the desert is compared to a woman perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, “Who is she that comes up from the desert like columns of smoke, in clouds of myrrh and frankincense?” (*Shir Hashirim* 3:6). Often myrrh and frankincense go hand in hand (*Shir Hashirim* 3:6, 4:6, 4:14). Perhaps, because they correspond to awe and love respectively. Myrrh with its purifying property corresponds to awe, whereas *Levona* with its connotation of white purity corresponds to love. According to Malbim, myrrh represents the vital soul, whereas frankincense represents the vegetative soul. By means of Israel’s burning love the incense of myrrh and frankincense emerged. When we ascend in spirituality (frankincense) and character development (myrrh), we have the ability to purify and elevate the hidden spiritual elements inherent in the lower vital and vegetative soul and include them in holiness.

Torah Dripping with Flowing Myrrh

When we develop true awe, we will be able to integrate the Torah in the deepest way. Any Torah student who sits before his teacher but his lips do not drip with myrrh [due to fear of his teacher], those lips shall be burnt, as it is written: "His lips are like roses, dripping with flowing myrrh" (*Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 30b*). Perhaps the student's lips are compared to myrrh because the myrrh flows extremely slowly from the tree. Likewise, we must realize that the sweetness of Torah is not acquired hastily. Rather it drips, in an almost imperceptible way into the student. The Rebbe is like a tree and the Torah that he teaches can be likened to myrrh. If the student tries to speed up the process he can get burned as it states, "be careful of their coals in order that you should not get burnt" (*Pirkei Avot 2:10*). On the other hand the burning of the lips can be understood in a positive light. When the Rabbi learns Torah with his student, he enters into his heart the holy fire of the letters of the Torah. This way the excitement of the Creator burns within him like fire. With this fire, the student can keep going on his own and receive new Torah insights (*Toldot Aharon Likutim*). In order to retain and build on the Torah of his master the student needs both 'love' – corresponding to "His lips are like roses..." and 'awe' corresponding to "...dripping with flowing myrrh."

Consoling Grief for the Dead

Myrrh was most commonly used in preparation for burial and for embalming to keep the body from decomposing. The smell of myrrh has traditionally been a symbol of suffering, burned at funerals or other occasions of mourning. There are few herbs so useful in working through personal sorrows and tragedies. Myrrh will help ease the troubled soul in its grieving. It brings comfort to those who have lost a loved one, whose troubled hearts need the healing strength of understanding the mystery of death. Burned as an incense myrrh purifies the area, lifts the vibrations and creates peace. Burning myrrh oil releases a mysterious, spiritual presence into any room, and is therefore renowned in aromatherapy for its meditative quality and for prayer. Myrrh is rarely burned alone; usually in conjunction with frankincense or other resins.

Healing Properties of Myrrh

Among the numerous healing properties of myrrh, I found the following qualities most remarkable:

Myrrh has been found to inhibit the growth in eight different types of cancer cells, specifically gynecological cancers (http://academicjournals.org/article/article1380545334_Su%20et%20al.pdf). Myrrh is an expectorant that helps relieve congestion, coughs and colds, while reducing phlegm. Due to its anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties, myrrh treats inflammation of the mouth and gums such as gingivitis and mouth ulcers. As a mouth rinse, it prevents gum disease and freshens the breath. Therefore, it is commonly used as an ingredient in mouthwash and toothpaste. Myrrh oil also helps maintain healthy skin by treating scrapes and wounds to prevent infection and soothing chapped or cracked skin. It likewise helps reduce fungal infections such as athlete's foot or ringworm. Apply a few drops on a clean cloth before rubbing it gently on the skin.

Hands On:

By making your own lotions and creams you can prevent your skin from absorbing the harmful chemicals of commercial skin products. This homemade lotion with frankincense and myrrh essential oils promotes regeneration of cells, hydrates the skin, is anti-septic, anti-aging, protects and treats skin against wounds, acne and other skin ailments and heals scars.

Homemade Frankincense and Myrrh Lotion

¼ Cup olive oil
¼ Cup coconut oil
¼ Cup bees wax
¼ Cup shea butter
2 Tbs. vitamin E
20 drops frankincense essential oil
20 drops myrrh essential oil
BPA free plastic lotion dispenser bottles

1. Put olive oil, coconut oil, beeswax and shea butter in glass bowl then place that bowl in saucepan with water.
2. Heat stove to medium and mix ingredients together.
3. Once mixed put in refrigerator for an hour until solid.
4. With a regular mixer or hand mixer beat the mixture until it is whipped and fluffy. Then add essential oils and vitamin E and mix.
5. Fill container and store in cool place.

[\(https://draxe.com/homemade-frankincense-myrrh-lotion/\)](https://draxe.com/homemade-frankincense-myrrh-lotion/)