[1] The Argument of the Sermon: *to vouch for a man’s uprightness*, so that he is first awoken to the good deed, and that his love will be set forth as incense before the Lord when he lights the lamps of his soul for His worship alone, in order to stir His desire, blessed be He, to him, so that He lavishes upon him His blessing with additional light and gladness, and joy and honour.

[2] *Yoma*, chapter *Hosí’u lo*:

Our Rabbis taught: *And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord*: i.e., he must not put it in order outside and thus bring it in. (This is) to remove the error from the minds of the Sadducees who said: He must prepare it without, and bring it in. What is their interpretation?—*For I appear in the cloud upon the ark-cover*. The Sages said [to them]: But it is said already *And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord*. If so for what purpose then is it stated *For I appear in the cloud [upon the ark-cover]?* It comes to teach us that he puts into it a smoke-raiser.—Whence do we know that he must put a smoke-raiser into it?—Because it is said: *that the cloud of the incense may cover [the ark-cover]*.

[3] If we desire the nearness of God, the beginning of awakening should come from us, as our sages of blessed memory said, “If a man comes to purify himself, he is helped.” This is similar to the meaning of the saying in the Zohar, parashat *Lekh lekha*.

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1 Proverbs 27: 9.  
2 Job 33: 23.  
3 Cf. Psalms 141: 2.  
4 Cf. Esther 8: 16.  
5 Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 53a, with some omissions.  
6 Leviticus 16: 13.  
7 Leviticus 16: 13.  
9 Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 38b.  
10 Not a literal translation. The Hebrew *yaşiš ‘al nezer* is a wordplay on Exodus 39: 30; Leviticus 8: 9.  
11 Zohar, 1: 88b.
I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me\textsuperscript{12}—we have learned: the Divine Presence is not found among sinners, but once a person begins to purify himself—drawing near the blessed Holy One—the Divine Presence dwells upon him, as is written, I am my beloved's, first; then, his desire is toward me. If one comes to purify himself, he is purified.

[4] In my opinion, this is one of the meanings of incense (qetoret): that the fire of His love, blessed be He, should be kindled in us, so that we will burn with it always, until a flame comes up (‘olah),\textsuperscript{13} and our smoke rises like the smoke from a furnace, pleasing to Him, blessed be He, for a sweet savour.\textsuperscript{14} This is similar to what the Divine passionate lover said, Who is this that cometh up (‘olah) out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed (meqatreret) with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?\textsuperscript{15}—which is an allusion to this nation, described with perfect love. [5] The word qetoret is derived from meshare qitrin (loosing of knots);\textsuperscript{16} as in the Midrash of R. Simeon bar Yohai,\textsuperscript{17} “incense (qetoret) binds (qashir) the bond of faith.” Both words\textsuperscript{18} were combined in Bereshit Rabbah, section 61, regarding the name Keturah, who is Hagar:\textsuperscript{19} [she was called Keturah] because she tied together (qitrah) piety and nobility [in herself], and because she tied (qashrah) her opening, so that she was not intimate with any man from the day she separated from Abraham. According to our understanding, it indicates a connection [to God] that is fastened (qishur) with great love.

[6] His love, blessed be He, will then be awakened\textsuperscript{20} toward us: for indeed the beginning of awakening should come from us, draw His individual love to us, even though it is a principle that His universal love always comes first, due to His great mercy and goodness.\textsuperscript{21} We relate this to what our sages of blessed memory said,\textsuperscript{22} “Although the fire was coming down from heaven yet was it obligatory to bring private fire.” [7]

\textsuperscript{12} Song of Songs 7: 11.
\textsuperscript{13} Also, “until there is a flame of a burnt-offering.”
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Numbers 29: 2 et al.
\textsuperscript{15} Song of Songs 3: 6.
\textsuperscript{16} Daniel 5: 12.
\textsuperscript{17} Zohar, III: 11a.
\textsuperscript{18} i.e., the roots q.f.r and q.sh.r.
\textsuperscript{19} The following is a combination of Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 61: 4 and Rashi on Genesis 25: 1 (And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah).
\textsuperscript{20} Cf. Song of Songs 3: 5.
\textsuperscript{21} God’s universal love is always present, but if one wants to receive individual love from Him, one’s own love for God has to be awakened first.
\textsuperscript{22} Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 53a.