

Jan 6/2019 Mt. 2:1-12 & Is. 60: 1-6

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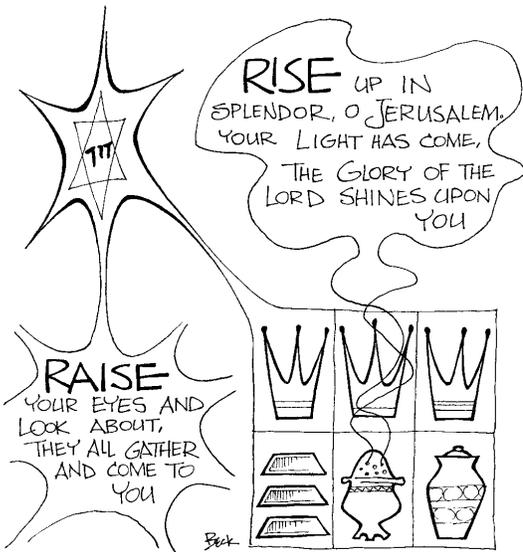
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Is. 60: 1 Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of HaShem is risen upon thee. 2 For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee HaShem will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. 3 And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising. 4 Lift Up thine eyes round about, and see: they all are gathered together, and come to thee; thy sons come from far, and thy daughters are borne on the side. 5 Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall throb and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. 6 The caravan of camels shall cover thee, and of the young camels of Midian and Ephah, all coming from Sheba; they shall bring gold and incense,

and shall proclaim the praises of HaShem.

COMMENTARY:



The Midrash says that God showed Moses a half-shekel coin made of fire and said, “Like this one shall they give (Rashi on Exodus 30:13).” The Noam Elimelech explains that money is like fire; it can be used to create, protect, and nourish, or it can be used to harm and destroy. The silver half-shekel stands at the opening of our Torah portion as a warning of the potential dangers of wealth. Many of the donations for the Mishkan came from the great wealth that the Israelites, following God’s command, requested and were given from their Egyptian neighbors as they were preparing to leave slavery.

Incense: One of the most refined and holy of all the offerings brought in Jewish worship during the time of the Temple, and the time of the Tent of Meeting before it, was the ketoret, the special blend of incense.

The burning of the incense comes to its utmost expression in this weekly Torah portion of Ahare Mot, where it becomes the offering of the High Priest on Yom Kippur as he enters into the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:12-13). This portion can illuminate for us the Torah’s insistence that we raise up the beauty of the physical world into spiritual service.