

Vayikra-Minchah, Gift of the Soul

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

Chapter 2 of Vayikra explains to us the *menachos*, flour offerings. These menachos were made from soles, fine flour mixed with oil. There were a few variations. There was the minchah made in a frying pan, a *machavas*, baked in an oven and the *marcheshes*, deep-fry. The standard minchah was mixed with oil and frankincense. The minchah of the *sotah* [woman suspected of unfaithfulness, see Bamidbar 5:15] and the minchah for certain sins [Vayikra 5:7-10] did not have oil and frankincense. Also, the minchah of the *sotah* was made from barley flour unlike most of the *menachos* which were made from wheat flour.

The Midrash in Vayikra Rabbah 3:7 explains that one should not be tempted to say that he will sin and bring a minchah on a pan soaked with oil. Rather, Hashem says to the sinner, "Why did you not soak your deeds with Torah which oil is symbolic of?" The lack of Torah and Mitzvos is manifested in the dry flour. Hence, no oil was brought with any such minchah.

The lack of Frankincense indicates a lack of adherence to the ways of our avos and emahos, patriarchs and matriarchs. In Shir Hashirim 4:6 it states, 'I will go up to the mountain of Myrrh and the hill of frankincense'. The Midrash states that the mountain of myrrh refers to the patriarchs and the hill of frankincense refers to the matriarchs. The *sotah* forfeited the frankincense because she departed from ways of the matriarchs. Perhaps this idea extends to other sins as well.

A voluntary minchah did contain oil and frankincense. Oil connected the giver to Torah and Mitzvos and frankincense connected the giver to the avos and emahos. The essence of the avos and emahos was total self surrender for Hashem. Usually, it was a poor man who gave a Korbbon minchah. By doing so, he was giving his 'daily bread' as a gift to Hashem. For this reason, the Torah begins the section with when a nefesh, literally a soul, sacrifices a minchah to Hashem. The minchah, as a result had this special status. This is also why our afternoon davening is called minchah. Its time is in the middle of the day, in the midst of our daily pursuits. Sometimes this is difficult but we do it. We stop to acknowledge that Hashem is the source for our lives and all that we have. So this service is a minchah to Hashem.