

"And the man shall bring his wife to the Kohen and shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an eifah of barley meal, he shall not pour upon it any oil, nor pour frankincense on it." (5:15)

Rashi cites the *Talmud Sotah 12a*, which explains the reason for the specific ingredients of this *korban*. Meal was used instead of fine flour, barley rather than wheat. This modification was due to the repulsiveness of the *sotah's* immoral act; because she acted like an animal, her offering is the food of an animal. Oil is not poured over the meal, since oil symbolizes light and the *sotah* acted in darkness. Frankincense is not placed on the *korban*, since the Matriarchs are referred to as "*levonah*," frankincense, and she deviated from their paths.

Horav B.Z. Baruk, z.l., makes a noteworthy observation from this *Talmudic* statement. Man thinks that one who serves Hashem in a lackluster manner will be indicted by the Heavenly Tribunal according to his level. Hashem, however, will not admonish him for not attaining the lofty heights reached by *Torah* luminaries. One does not demand of an individual who desecrates *Shabbos* or eats non-kosher that he become like the *Chofetz Chaim*!

This perspective is entirely misdirected! Regardless of one's abysmal degree of spirituality, Hashem will judge him not only for his repulsive transgressions, but also for not attaining the sublime degree of service to Hashem evidenced by the Patriarchs! Man has the ability to reach the loftiest heights of spirituality, to climb to the zenith of *mitzvah* performance and *avodas Hashem*. He will ultimately have to answer for his lack of compliance.

This is *Chazal's* message. On the one hand, the *sotah* is reprimanded for acting as an animal. At the same time, however, she must answer for not being like the Matriarchs! This is consistent with the *Rambam's* statement in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, "Every one must say, '*When will my actions reach those of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov?*'" How fortunate is one whose spiritual aspirations exceed his grasp.