

A tenth eiphah of barley flour; he shall not pour oil over it and shall not put frankincense upon it. (5:15)

The composition of the *korban* brought on behalf of the *sotah*, wayward wife, is indicative of its purpose and symbolism. Coarse barley is used instead of fine flour. She acted coarsely, thus her sacrifice reflects her behavior. Likewise, she offers barley, which is a grain most often reserved for animal feed. She acted in a base manner, a behavior suitable for an animal. Last, the *korban* does not have the usual accompaniment of oil and frankincense, because incense recalls the spiritual fragrance of the *Imahos*, Matriarchs, and oil symbolizes light. She acted in darkness to conceal her sin, and she is far-removed from the example of the Matriarchs – whom she should have sought to emulate.

At first glance, what we expect of this woman is incredulous. She acted like an animal; yet, we blame her for turning away from the example set by our holy Matriarchs. Is this not a bit inconsistent? Do we expect a woman who acted so basely to think about the Matriarchs? Do we demand of the drunken derelict lying in his own vomit in the Bowery why he did not become President of the United States?

The *Chachmei haMussar*, Ethicists, explain that one of the primary causes for this woman's downfall is precisely that she had no set goals in life, no role model to emulate – so what else should one expect from her? **Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl**, was wont to compare striving for greatness to a bird flapping its wings as it soars into the sky. If for one moment it halts its flapping of the wings – it falls to the ground. Likewise, one must have a defined set of realistic goals and never swerve from their realization – even for a moment.

It was General Napoleon Bonaparte who said, “A soldier who does not aspire to be a general – will not even be a soldier.” A young Jewish woman should view the *Imahos* as the apex of Jewish womanhood. If one sets high goals, then there is hope that, even if these standards are not met, the individual's life will always be one of striving. Conversely, if there are no goals, life is one static, unchanging, wandering in space affair, which can only lead to depression and sin. It is up to us to make the correct choice.