

## **And he shall not put frankincense upon it. (5:15)**

*Rashi* explains that the ingredients which comprised the *Minchas Sotah* were unlike that of other *Menachos*. The *sotah's Minchah* used barley, which is eaten by animals, as opposed to wheat, which is consumed by humans. Her base actions were indicative of someone who had gravitated more to the animal sphere. There was no oil, since oil is the symbol of light, and the *sotah* acted in darkness. Last, there is no frankincense because the Hebrew word for frankincense is *levonah*, which is the term the Torah uses to describe our *Imahos*, Matriarchs. Implied by the lack of frankincense is that this woman, who gave in to her contemptible passions and acted dishonorably, is being compared to the saintly Matriarchs: "Why were you not like them?" Is that appropriate? Even a fine, upstanding woman, who is the paragon of morality, is not held in disrespect because she has not reached the level of the Matriarchs. They were in an altogether different league.

*Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl*, explains that she is not held in contempt for not becoming like the *Imahos*. Understandably, that does not come into question. She is held accountable, however, for not aspiring to be like them. Had she dreamt of becoming as great as our Matriarchs, she would never had plummeted to the nadir of depravity in which she now finds herself. The root of her sin is a lack of spiritual ambition. Everyone must seek an avenue to better himself. If one does not think big, however, he will be less than small. *Chayav adam lomar, masai yagiu maasai l'maasei avosai*, "It is incumbent upon one to say, 'When will my deeds reach the level of the deeds of my ancestors?'" (*Tanna D'vei Eliyahu* 25). This means that one should have his ancestors' achievements in the forefront of his mind. They should be his lodestar, the beacon which guides his ascension up the ladder of spirituality.

The *Chafetz Chaim* would often quote *Horav Yisrael Salanter's* aphorism, "Everyone wants to know and be totally proficient in the entire *Shas* – in the space of one night. The problem is: they still want to have a good night's sleep." One's does not aspire for momentous achievements amid the luxuries of sleep and vacation. One's aspiration must be in unison with his commitment. Great achievements are not the result of a pampered lifestyle. It takes focus on the goal and toil toward achievement.

*Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zl (Bircas Shmuel)*, would say, "Everyone is obligated to have high *she'ifos*, ambitions. I strived/aspired to be the next *Rav Akiva Eiger*. Instead, I became *Baruch Berel*. Had I strived only to become *Baruch Berel*, I would have been left with nothing!" He writes, (*Bircas Shmuel* end of *Meseches Kiddushin*), "According to the Torah, one must educate his sons and grandsons in Torah, so that they become *gaonim* and *chachamim* (reach the apex of knowledge and wisdom). This is the obligation – not simply to make them fine, upstanding Jews."

When I write about love for, and toil in, Torah, I immediately think of *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*. When I write about aspiring for greatness in all that one does – especially in Torah, I think of *Rav Gifter*. He demanded and rewarded productivity from his *talmidim*. Nothing irked him more than someone who was wasting precious time. When he saw boys playing ball, he would call over,

“Hit a home run!” When the boys looked back at the *Rosh Yeshivah* incredulously, he said, “*A mentch darf tun altz mit zeine gantze kochos*, ‘a person must do everything he does with his entire strength. Otherwise, the tendency to not do will insinuate itself into everything you do.’” The *Rosh Yeshivah* did not recognize the status of “half way.” One had to give it his all. He would encourage his students who were leaving the *yeshivah* to further their secular education, to make a *Kiddush Hashem*, Sanctify Hashem's Name (with their demeanor and assiduousness). He demanded that they get A's, not settle for a B.

*Rav Gifter* expanded the minds of these students and instructed them to aim higher. He learned this lesson from his own *Rebbeim* in Telshe, Lithuania. *Rav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl, Rosh Yeshivah* and *Rav* of Telshe, would lecture to the *baalei batim*, laymen of the community, on subjects that were esoteric by nature. With his brilliance and profundity in all areas of Torah, he drove the depth of his lectures up another notch. Indeed, one would have to be well-versed in all areas of Torah and *Kabbalah* to grasp his ideas and their meaning. When queried why he spoke over the heads of his audience, he replied that he was speaking to their minds – to their hearts and to their souls.