

A Taste of Torah - Nourishment in the Parasha

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Parashat Vayikra: The Humblest Offering

What Does the Minchah Offering Teach Us About True Nourishment?

What is More Vital for Health and Healing than Superfoods and Supplements?

Last week, I caught a rather nasty cold. Before and during my recent tour, I had worked diligently to protect my health. While people around me were sniffing, sneezing, and coughing left and right, I strengthened my resolve to remain unaffected and reinforced my emunah-system. I took especially good care of myself – making sure to take my vitamins and supplements, eating healthy foods, and avoiding toxic sugar. I was grateful to return home in one piece, completely well. Unlike in prior stressful tours – where I came home sick, with a lingering cough and exhaustion – this time I felt particularly thankful that with Hashem’s help I had managed to stay healthy.

About a week after returning home, however, the unavoidable finally caught up with me. Although I am not overly worried about the war or the sirens – after all, I see Hashem’s hand guiding events and helping Israel remove the husks from the world – it is still stressful to be awakened suddenly by that eerie rising and falling alarm and to rush down to the cold cellar. Even during the day, it is hardly pleasant.

Yet the real turning point came from something much more ordinary. My son, whom I had invited for Shabbat, told me that he would also be staying with our five-year-old granddaughter on Sunday. Because of the war, the kindergarten was closed, so it made perfect sense. And of course, I love my granddaughter dearly. She is a sweet and delightful child. Still, the news unsettled me. My routine had suddenly changed.

Motzei Shabbat (Saturday Night) is usually when I clean up after guests and restore order to the house. Sunday is my main workday. Now, what would happen to my schedule? I wanted to help my son and also enjoy time with my granddaughter, yet the mere thought of my routine being disrupted made me feel anxious.

Ironically, during my tour, there was no routine at all. Every day was different, yet I was spiritually and emotionally prepared for that. In fact, the lack of routine itself became its own kind of routine. But here at home, the idea of losing my familiar rhythm suddenly overwhelmed me.

In the end, my fears proved completely unnecessary. My son lovingly took care of his daughter, and she behaved beautifully the entire time. I caught the cold not from the reality of having my granddaughter with me a little longer, but from my self-inflicted stress. It arose not from what actually happened, but from my worry about the disruption that might have happened.

This experience taught me something profound. True health and healing depend on more than nutritious green leaves, vitamins, and supplements. What nourishes us most deeply is menuchah – inner repose and emotional equilibrium. When the soul rests in calm trust rather than rigid control, the body itself finds greater strength and balance.

Why is the Meal Offering Described as Brought by a ‘Soul’?

The insight about nourishment described above helps us appreciate the meaning of the minchah offering mentioned in *Parashat Vayikra*. The Torah describes the minchah offering as fine flour and oil – simple human food – accompanied by frankincense. Unlike the animal offerings brought by the wealthy, the minchah could be brought by someone who had very little.

סַפֵּר וַיִּקְרָא פֶּרֶק בַּפְּסוּק אַ וַיִּנְפֹּשׂ כִּי תִקְרִיב קִרְבָּן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה סֶלֶת יִהְיֶה קִרְבָּנוּ וַיִּצֶק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וַיִּתֵּן עָלֶיהָ לִבְנֵה:

“When a soul brings a meal offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil upon it

and place frankincense upon it" (*Vayikra* 2:1).

Chazal note something striking here. The Torah usually introduces offerings with the word אָדָם/*adam* – a person, yet here it says נֶפֶשׁ/*nefesh* – soul. Rashi explains that because flour is less expensive than animals or birds, the meal offering was typically brought by a poor person. “Since this offering often represented the little food that the person could spare, Hashem considers it as though the person offered his very soul” (Rashi, *Vayikra* 2:1). The poor person often labors with his entire being to obtain even a small measure of flour. Therefore, when he brings it as an offering, he is truly giving from his own sustenance – from his life itself (Ba'al HaTurim, *Vayikra* 2:1). Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor adds that for this very reason, all meal offerings are designated *kodesh kodashim* – “most holy,” for Hashem shows special affection toward the humble offering of the poor. What could have been eaten at his own table is instead placed upon the altar. The Torah elevates the simplest food, fine wheat flour, into a sacred gift. In this way, the Torah reveals a profound perspective on nourishment: the sincerity of the giver matters far more than the material value of the gift. Even ordinary food, when offered with devotion, becomes an expression of the soul.

Why is the Minchah Offering Called Kodesh Kodashim – Holy of Holies?

The Hebrew word מִנְחָה/*minchah* doesn't only mean a meal offering; it primarily means a gift. The Torah uses the same word for the gift Ya'acov sent to Esav (*Bereishit* 32:14). The minchah offering, therefore, represents a humble gift presented before Hashem. What could have been eaten at his own table is instead placed upon the altar.

סַפֵּר וַיִּקְרָא פֶּרֶקַב פְּסוּקָה וְהַנּוֹתֵרֶת מִן הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים מֵאֲשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם:

“And what remains of the meal offering shall belong to Aharon and his sons; it is holy of holies from the fire offerings of Hashem” (*Vayikra* 2:3).

The Torah elevates the simplest food, fine wheat flour, into a sacred gift. The simple flour brought by the poor person thus becomes קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים – “holy of holies.” What normally nourishes the human body is elevated into the service of Heaven. Rabbeinu Bachaya highlights the demanding ritual of *kemitzah* – the priest taking a precise handful of flour to burn on the altar – noting that it was one of the most difficult acts performed in the Temple service. The remainder of the offering was eaten by the kohanim, transforming this humble food into קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים – “holy of holies.” From the smallest handful of flour, an act of profound sanctity was created.

The flour must be the finest possible wheat flour, for an offering brought to the Divine must represent the best of what a person possesses (Ibn Ezra, *Vayikra* 2:1). The Torah describes a human being as *adam*, *ish*, *basar*, or *nefesh*, each highlighting a different dimension of human existence. The term *nefesh* emphasizes the inner and refined dimension of the person, and the offering itself reflects this purity. The flour must be finely sifted, the oil alludes to good deeds – “Let not oil be lacking upon your head” (*Kohelet* 9:8) – and the frankincense represents a fragrance that is pleasing both to Hashem and to people (*Pesikta Zutrata*, *Vayikra* 2:1). The offering, therefore, reflects a life refined through good actions and upright character.

The meal offering can also serve as a model for the inner life of spiritual service. The four types of voluntary meal offerings all come from wheat flour but represent different forms of devotion. The simplest form, the minchah offering of pure flour, symbolizes a person who serves Hashem with completely pure intention, without any mixture of ulterior motives. Just as the flour must be sifted until no dust remains, so the worshipper strives to refine his thoughts and intentions until his service becomes clear and sincere.

In this way, the humble grain offering reveals a profound truth: true closeness to Hashem does not depend on wealth or grandeur, but on purity of heart and the willingness to dedicate even the simplest nourishment

to a higher purpose. Even the most basic food, when offered with sincerity and devotion, becomes a bridge between the human soul and Hashem.

How Does the Minchah Nourish the Entire World?

Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen explains that the humble simplicity of the minchah carries profound spiritual power. Based on the Zohar, he teaches that an offering made from fine flour in its matzah-like purity, awakens joy among the heavenly chariots above. He further writes that the oil poured upon the minchah comes “לְהַאִיר לְכָל הָעוֹלָם” – “to illuminate the entire world,” and that “כָּל הָעוֹלָם נִיזוֹן בְּזַכּוּתוֹ” – “the entire world is nourished through its merit” (Siftei Kohen, *Vayikra* 2:1). Although the minchah may appear to be the smallest and simplest of offerings, through its purity it becomes a channel of joy and blessing for all existence. The flour corresponds to purified thought, the oil to wisdom and radiance, and the frankincense to hidden elevation. Even the kemitzah – the small handful lifted from the offering – becomes a remembrance before Hashem. The minchah thus reveals a profound principle: when nourishment is refined and offered with purity, it does not sustain only the one who brings it. It releases light and blessings that nourish the entire world.

Why Is the Minchah Linked to Menuchah – Rest and Soothing?

The word מִנְחָה/*minchah* can also be connected to מְנוּחָה/*menuchah* – rest and repose. The time of minchah is associated with the latter part of the day, when the shadows lengthen and the attribute of דִּין/*din* begins to intensify. Yet precisely at that vulnerable hour, the minchah serves to calm and soften judgment, drawing the soul back into quiet alignment with Hashem. Furthermore, the word נֶפֶשׁ/*nefesh* carries the sense of repose and restoration, similar to the expression וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ – “on the seventh day *vayinafash* – He rested” (*Shemot* 31:17). Thus, in our verse as well, “nefesh” can be understood in the sense of נַחַת רוּחַ/*nachat ruach* – a spirit of soothing and repose. When there is anger in the world, the pure soul of the tzaddik stands in prayer and removes that wrath through the purity of his nefesh (Siftei Kohen, *Vayikra* 2:1).

In this light, the minchah becomes so much more than the poor person’s offering of simple food. Minchah also refers to the calming of agitation and the return of the soul to a state of menuchah. It is an offering that brings rest to the soul and stillness to the world, transforming nourishment from the mere filling of hunger into the restoration of inner balance. Just as food nourishes the body and restores its strength, menuchah nourishes the inner life of the soul. When a person offers the humble gift of flour, oil, and frankincense before Hashem, the act itself quiets the turbulence of the heart and restores spiritual equilibrium. The humble minchah offering, thus, becomes a way of easing harshness, softening din, and drawing menuchah down into the world.

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