**The no frills korbanot: flour without oil or frankincense - Menachot 59a (Mishnah 5:3)**

Mishnah Zevachim 5:3 delineate two flour offerings that may not contain oil or frankincense: the most impoverished type of sinner's korban, as well as the flour offering given in the case of a *sotah*, a woman suspected of adultery. What is the logic behind denying these korbanot oil and incense? What does this logic teach us about korbanot in general, or about these korbanot in particular?

Questions? Comments? Email dinanddaf@gmail.com

**1. משנה מנחות ה:ג**

יֵשׁ טְעוּנוֹת שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא לְבוֹנָה, לְבוֹנָה וְלֹא שֶׁמֶן, לֹא שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא לְבוֹנָה. וְאֵלּוּ טְעוּנוֹת שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, מִנְחַת הַסֹּלֶת, וְהַמַּחֲבַת, וְהַמַּרְחֶשֶׁת, וְהַחַלּוֹת, וְהָרְקִיקִין, מִנְחַת כֹּהֲנִים, וּמִנְחַת כֹּהֵן מָשִׁיחַ, וּמִנְחַת גּוֹיִם, וּמִנְחַת נְשִׁים, וּמִנְחַת הָעֹמֶר. מִנְחַת נְסָכִין טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן, וְאֵין טְעוּנָה לְבוֹנָה. לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים טָעוּן לְבוֹנָה, וְאֵין טָעוּן שֶׁמֶן. שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם, מִנְחַת חוֹטֵא וּמִנְחַת קְנָאוֹת, לֹא שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא לְבוֹנָה:

**There are** four types of meal offerings: Those **that require** both **oil and frankincense,** those that require **oil but not frankincense,** those that require **frankincense but not oil,** and those that require **neither frankincense nor oil.** The mishna elaborates: **And these** are the meal offerings that **require** both **oil and frankincense: The fine-flour meal offering,** as it is stated: "And he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon" (Leviticus 2:1); **the** meal offering prepared in **a pan** (see Leviticus 2:5–6); **the** meal offering prepared in **a deep pan** (see Leviticus 2:7–10); **and the** meal offering baked in an oven, which can be brought in the form of **loaves or** in the form of **wafers** (see Leviticus 2:4). Additional meal offerings that require both oil and frankincense are **the meal offering of priests; the meal offering of the anointed priest,** i.e., the griddle-cake offering brought by the High Priest every day, half in the morning and half in the evening; **the meal offering of a gentile; a meal offering** brought **by women;** and **the *omer* meal offering** (see Leviticus 23:15). **The meal offering** brought with **libations** that accompany burnt offerings and peace offerings **requires oil but does not require frankincense. The shewbread requires frankincense but does not require oil. The two loaves** brought on the festival of *Shavuot* (see Leviticus 23:17), **the meal offering of a sinner, and the meal offering of jealousy** brought by a *sota* **require neither oil nor frankincense.** The two loaves do not require oil or frankincense because these additions are not mentioned with regard to it. The meal offering of a sinner does not require them, as it is written: "He shall not put oil upon it, neither shall he give any frankincense upon it; for it is a sin offering" (Leviticus 5:11). With regard to the meal offering brought by a *sota*, it is similarly written: "He shall pour no oil upon it,

nor give frankincense upon it, for it is a meal offering of jealousy, a meal offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance” (Numbers 5:15).

**2. ויקרא ה:א-ה**

א וְנֶ֣פֶשׁ כִּֽי־תֶחֱטָ֗א וְשָׁמְעָה֙ קֹ֣ול אָלָ֔ה וְה֥וּא עֵ֛ד אֹ֥ו רָאָ֖ה אֹ֣ו יָדָ֑ע אִם־לֹ֥וא יַגִּ֖יד וְנָשָׂ֥א עֲוֹנֹֽו׃

If a person incurs guilt—
When someone has heard a public imprecation **imprecation Namely, against one who withholds testimony.* but (although able to testify as having seen or learned of the matter) has not given information and thus is subject to punishment;

ב אֹ֣ו נֶ֔פֶשׁ אֲשֶׁ֥ר תִּגַּ֛ע בְּכָל־דָּבָ֥ר טָמֵ֖א אֹו֙ בְּנִבְלַ֣ת חַיָּ֣ה טְמֵאָ֔ה אֹ֥ו בִּנְבֵלַ֖ת בְּהֵמָ֣ה טְמֵאָ֑ה אֹ֥ו בִּנְבֶ֖לֶת שֶׁ֣רֶץ טָמֵ֑א וְנֶעְלַ֥ם מִמֶּ֖נּוּ וְה֥וּא טָמֵ֖א וְאָשֵֽׁם׃

Or when a person touches any impure thing (be it the carcass of an impure beast or the carcass of impure cattle or the carcass of an impure creeping thing) but does not attend to it, and then, being impure, they realize their guilt;

ג אֹ֣ו כִֽי־יִגַּ֗ע בְּטֻמְאַ֤ת אָדָם֙ לְכֹ֣ל טֻמְאָתֹ֔ו אֲשֶׁ֥ר יִטְמָ֖א בָּ֑הּ וְנֶעְלַ֥ם מִמֶּ֖נּוּ וְה֥וּא יָדַ֖ע וְאָשֵֽׁם׃

Or when someone touches human impurity (any such impurity whereby one becomes impure) and, though knowing about it, does not attend to it, but later they realize their guilt;

ד אֹ֣ו נֶ֔פֶשׁ כִּֽי־תִשָּׁבַ֖ע לְבַטֵּ֣א בִשְׂפָתַ֑יִם לְהָרַ֥ע ׀ אֹ֖ו לְהֵיטִ֣יב לְכֹ֣ל אֲשֶׁר־יְבַטֵּ֣א הָאָדָ֗ם בִּשְׁבֻעָה֙ וְנֶעְלַ֣ם מִמֶּ֔נּוּ וְהוּא־יָדַ֖ע וְאָשֵׁ֣ם לְאַחַ֑ת מֵאֵֽלֶּה׃

Or when a person utters an oath to bad or good purpose (whatever a human being may utter in an oath) and, though knowing about it, does not attend to it, but later they realize their guilt in any of these matters—

ה וְהָיָ֕ה כִּֽי־יֶאְשַׁ֖ם לְאַחַ֣ת מֵאֵ֑לֶּה וְהִתְוַדָּ֕ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר חָטָ֖א עָלֶֽיהָ׃

upon realizing their guilt in any of these matters, that person shall confess having sinned in that way.

**3. ויקרא ה:יא**

וְאִם־לֹ֣א תַשִּׂ֗יג יָדֹ֛ו לִשְׁתֵּ֥י תֹרִ֖ים אֹ֣ו לִשְׁנֵ֣י בְנֵי־יֹונָ֑ה וְהֵבִ֞יא אֶת־קָרְבָּנֹ֤ו אֲשֶׁר־חָטָא֙ עֲשִׂירִ֣ת הָאֵפָ֔ה סֹ֖לֶת לְחַטָּ֑את לֹֽא־יָשִׂ֨ים עָלָ֜יהָ שֶׁ֗מֶן וְלֹא־יִתֵּ֤ן עָלֶ֙יהָ֙ לְבֹנָ֔ה כִּ֥י חַטָּ֖את הִֽוא׃

And if their means do not suffice for two turtledoves or two pigeons, they shall bring as an offering for that of which they are guilty a tenth of an *ephah* of choice flour for a purgation offering; they shall not add oil to it or lay frankincense on it, for it is a purgation offering.

**4. במדבר ה:יא-טו**

א וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר יְ-הוָ֖ה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֥ה לֵאמֹֽר׃

GOD spoke to Moses, saying:

ב דַּבֵּ֞ר אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל וְאָמַרְתָּ֤ אֲלֵהֶם֙ אִ֣ישׁ אִישׁ֔ כִּֽי־תִשְׂטֶ֥ה אִשְׁתּ֖וֹ וּמָעֲלָ֣ה בּ֑וֹ מָֽעַל׃

Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:
Regarding anyone whose wife has gone astray and broken faith with him,

ג וְשָׁכַ֤ב אִישׁ֙ אֹתָ֣הּ֔ שִׁכְבַ֖ת־זֶ֑רַע וְנֶעְלַ֤ם֙ מֵעֵינֵ֣י אִישָׁ֔הּ וְנִסְתְּרָ֖ה וְהִ֣יא נִטְמֵ֑את וְעֵד֙ אֵ֣ין בָּ֔הּ וְהִ֖וא לֹ֥א נִתְפָּֽשָׂה׃

in that another man has had carnal relations with her unbeknown to her husband, and she has kept secret the fact that she defiled herself without being forced, and there is no witness against her—

ד וְעָבַ֤ר עָלָיו֙ רוּחַ־קִנְאָ֔ה וְקִנֵּ֖א אֶת־אִשְׁתּ֑וֹ וְהִ֣וא נִטְמֵ֔את אוֹ־עָבַ֤ר עָלָיו֙ רוּחַ־קִנְאָ֔ה וְקִנֵּ֖א אֶת־אִשְׁתּ֑וֹ וְהִ֥יא לֹֽא נִטְמָֽאָה׃

but a fit of jealousy has come over him and he is wrought up about the wife who has defiled herself; or if a fit of jealousy has come over him and he is wrought up about his wife although she has not defiled herself:

ה וְהֵבִ֤יא הָאִישׁ֙ אֶת־אִשְׁתּ֔וֹ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵ֖ן וְהֵבִ֣יא אֶת־קָרְבָּנָ֣הּ עָלֶ֗יהָ עֲשִׂירִ֤ת הָאֵיפָה֙ קֶ֣מַח שְׂעֹרִ֔ים לֹֽא־יִצֹ֥ק עָלָ֛יו שֶׁ֖מֶן וְלֹא־יִתֵּ֣ן עָלָ֑יו לְבֹנָ֣ה כִּֽי־מִנְחַ֤ת קְנָאֹת֙ הִ֔וא מִנְחַ֥ת זִכָּר֖וֹן מַזְכֶּ֥רֶת עָוֹֽן׃

That man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an *ephah* of barley flour. No oil shall be poured upon it and no frankincense shall be laid on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance that recalls wrongdoing.

**5. רמב״ם מורה נבוכים ג, מו**

דרגות במין הקרבנות: בהתאם לדירוג החטא

[20] דע שככל שהחטא גדול יותר – כך קרבנו מסוג פחות יותר…

[22 ללא בשמים] בהתאם לעניין זה הוחסרו הטיוב והבישום ממנחת חוטא, וכן ממנחת שׂוֹטָה כי גם היא נחשדת על חטא, ואסר להקריב אותן בשמן ולבונה.

[מנחת חוטא] הטיוב הזה הוסר מהן משום שהמביא אותה אינו טוב ולא בעל מעשים יפים, וכאילו הוא מומרץ לחזור בתשובה ונאמר לו: "בשל רוע מעשיך, קרבנך הוא במצב הפחות ביותר".

[מנחת שוטה] וקרבנה של השׂוֹטָה, שמעשיה רעים יותר מן השוגג, עשוי מחומר פחות יותר, כי הוא "קֶמַח שְׂעֹרִים" (במדבר ה,טו). הרי נסדרו הפרטים האלה, ונמצא שמשמעותם מופלאה.

The greater the sin which a person had committed, the lower was the species from which the sin-offering was brought…

It is in accordance with the same principle that luxury and incense were absent from the oblations of a sinner (Lev. v.11), and of a sotah, i.e., a woman suspected of adultery (Num. 5:15). In these cases the oil and the frankincense were not added: this luxury was absent, because the persons that brought the oblation were not good and proper in their deeds, and they are, as it were, to be reminded by their offerings that they ought to repent; as if they were told, “Your offering is without any ornamental addition on account of the wickedness of your deeds.” As the sotah acted more disgracefully than any person who sins in ignorance, her offering consisted of the lowest kind, viz., of barley flour (ibid.). Thus the reasons of all these particular laws are well connected, and show that the precepts are wonderful in their significance.

**6. תוספתא סוטה א:ז**

כל המנחות שבתורה טעונות שמן ולבונה, חוץ ממנחת חוטא ומנחת קנאות, שנ' לא יצק עליה שמן ולא יתן עליה לבונה. ר' שמעון אומ' כל חטאות שבתורה אין טעונות נסכים, חוץ מחטאתו ואשמו של מצורע, שלא יהא קרבן חוטא מהודר…

All flour offerings in the Torah require oil and/or frankincense, except the flour offering of the sinner and the flour offering of jealousies, as is said: he shall not pour oil upon it or place frankincense upon it. R. Shimon says: no sin offering in the Torah require libations, except for the sin and guilt offerings of the lep, for the offering of a sinner should not be beautiful…

**7. ירושלמי סוטה ב:א, ט:**

תַּנֵּי רִבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי. מִפְּנֵי מַה אָמְרוּ. כָּל הַחַטָּאוֹת וְהָאֲשָׁמוֹת שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה אֵין טְעוּנִין נְסָכִים. שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא קָרְבָּנוֹ שֶׁלַּחוֹטֶא נִרְאֶה מְהוּדָּר . הָתִיבוּן. הֲרֵי חַטָּאתוֹ וְאֲשָׁמוֹ שֶׁלַּמְצוֹרָע. אֵין תֵּימַר שֶׁאֵינוֹ חוֹטֵא. הָאָמַר רִבִּי יִצְחָק. זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמְּצוֹרָע. זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמּוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע. אָמַר רִבִּי לָא. מִכֵּיוָן שֶׁנִּתְיַיסֵּר וּכְתִיב וְנִקְלָה אָחִיךָ לְעֵינֶיךָ כְּמִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ חוֹטֵא.

Rebbi Simeon bar Loḥai stated: Why did they say that no purification or reparation sacrifices need wine offerings? That the sacrifice of a sinner should not be magnificent. They objected: There are the purification and the reparation offerings of the scale-diseased. If you say that he is no sinner, did not Rebbi Isaac say: “That shall be the instruction for the scale-diseased,” this is the instruction for the slanderer! Rebbi Hila said, since he was made to suffer and it is written “that your brother should [not] be contemptible in your eyes,” he is as if he had not sinned.

**8. מנחות ו.-:**

אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן: בְּדִין הוּא שֶׁתְּהֵא מִנְחַת חוֹטֵא טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא חוֹטֵא נִשְׂכָּר, וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה? שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא קָרְבָּנוֹ מְהוּדָּר, וּבַדִּין הוּא שֶׁתְּהֵא חַטַּאת חֵלֶב טְעוּנָה נְסָכִים,

The Gemara responds: It was necessary for the mishna to teach this *halakha* in this manner in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon. As it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Shimon says: By right the meal offering of a sinner should require oil and

frankincense like other meal offerings, so that the sinner will not profit. And for what reason does it not require oil and frankincense? So that his offering will not be of superior quality. And likewise, by right the sin offering of forbidden fat, i.e., the offering brought by one who unwittingly ate the forbidden fat of a domesticated animal, should require libations

שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא חוֹטֵא נִשְׂכָּר, וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה? שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא קָרְבָּנוֹ מְהוּדָּר.
so that the sinner will not profit. And for what reason does his offering not require libations? So that his offering will not be of superior quality.

**9. סוטה טו.**

הָכִי קָאָמַר: כָּל הַמְּנָחוֹת טְעוּנוֹת שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, וּבָאוֹת מִן הַחִטִּין, וּבָאוֹת סֹלֶת. מִנְחַת חוֹטֵא, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה — בָּאָה מִן הַחִטִּין וּבָאָה סֹלֶת. מִנְחַת הָעוֹמֶר, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהִיא בָּאָה מִן הַשְּׂעוֹרִין — טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה וּבָאָה גֶּרֶשׂ. וְזוֹ, אֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה לֹא שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא לְבוֹנָה, וּבָאָה מִן הַשְּׂעוֹרִין, וּבָאָה קֶמַח.
The Gemara responds: This is what the mishna is saying: All meal-offerings other than that of the *sota* require oil and frankincense, and they are brought from wheat; and they are also brought from fine flour. However, the meal-offering of a sinner, even though it does not require oil and frankincense, must still be brought from wheat and brought from fine flour. Similarly, the *omer* meal-offering, even though it is brought from barley, requires oil and frankincense, and it is brought as groats. But this one, the *sota* meal-offering, requires neither oil nor frankincense, and it is brought from barley and brought as unsifted flour. While the meal-offering of a sinner and the *omer* meal-offering are similar to other meal-offerings in one of these respects, the *sota* meal-offering is different in both respects.

תַּנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן: בְּדִין הוּא שֶׁתְּהֵא מִנְחַת חוֹטֵא טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא חוֹטֵא נִשְׂכָּר. וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה — שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא קָרְבָּנוֹ מְהוּדָּר.
It is taught in a *baraita* (*Tosefta* 1:10) that Rabbi Shimon said: By right, it should have been the *halakha* that the meal-offering of a sinner requires oil and frankincense, so that a sinner should not stand to gain by not having to pay for them. For what reason does the verse not require them? It is so that his offering will not be of superior quality.

**10. ספר החינוך מצוה קכה: שלא ליתן שמן זית במנחה חוטא**

…משרשי המצוה. לפי שהשמן רמז למעלה ולגדלה, שאם אתה מערבו בכל משקים הוא צף על כלן, והוא דבר חשוב מאד, וידוע הוא חשיבות שמן הטוב, ולכן ימשחו בו המתחנכים למעלת מלכות או כהנה, על כן אין ראוי לתת ממנו במנחת החוטא הצריך להראות בעצמו דאגה ושפלות על שבא דבר עברה בידו. ועוד נאמר שהוא לחמלת העני שלא להטריחו יותר מדי להביא שמן כי השם ברוך הוא לא יטריח בריה.

ומפני זה גם כן לא חיבו רק במעט קמח, שאי אפשר לשום אדם אפילו בדלי דלות בלא מעט קמח. וזה יספיק לנו גם על הלבונה.

…the root of the commandment: for oil references status and greatness, for if you mix it with all liquids, it will rise to the top; and it is a distinguished item, and good oil is known to be distinguished, which is why they use it to anoint all who are inducted in monarchy or priesthood. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use it for a sinner's flour offering, which must show worry and lowliness because one has transgressed. And we may also say that it is for pity on the poor person, so as not to trouble them too much to bring oil, for God does not wish to cause trouble to any creature. And for that reason God also only required a small amount of flour, for everyone - even the poorest - must have some flour. And this will suffice us regarding frankincense as well.

See also: ספר החינוך מצוה קכו: שלא ליתן לבונה במנחת חוטא

**11. במדבר רבה ט:י״ג**

(במדבר ה, טו): לֹא יִצֹק עָלָיו שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא יִתֵּן עָלָיו לְבֹנָה, תָּנֵי אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בְּדִין הוּא שֶׁתְּהֵא מִנְחַת חוֹטֵא טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן וּלְבוֹנָה, כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא חוֹטֵא נִשְׂכָּר, וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינָהּ טְעוּנָה, שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא קָרְבָּנוֹ מְהֻדָּר.
דָּבָר אַחֵר, לֹא יִצֹק עָלָיו שֶׁמֶן, לָמָּה, שֶׁהַשֶּׁמֶן אוֹרָה לָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכָּתוּב קָרָאוֹ יִצְהָר, וְהִיא אָהֲבָה אֶת הָאֲפֵלָה, לֹא יִהְיֶה אוֹרָה בְּמִנְחָתָהּ. וְלֹא יִתֵּן עָלָיו לְבֹנָה, שֶׁהַלְּבוֹנָה זִכָּרוֹן לָאִמָּהוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שיר השירים ד, ו): אֵלֵךְ לִי אֶל הַר הַמּוֹר, אֵלּוּ אָבוֹת הָעוֹלָם, (שיר השירים ד, ו): וְאֶל גִּבְעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה, אֵלּוּ הָאִמָּהוֹת, וְזוֹ פֵּרְשָׁה מִדַּרְכֵּיהֶן, לֹא יְהֵא זִכְרוֹנָן בְּקָרְבָּנָהּ, שֶׁהַלְּבוֹנָה קְרוּיָה זִכָּרוֹן.

He shall not pour oil on it, nor place frankincense on it. It was taught: R. Shimon said: by rights, a sinner's flour offering should have required oil and frankincense, so that a sinner would not benefit (i.e., have to pay less for the offering). But why doesn't it? So that a sinner's offering will not be beautiful.

Another explanation: he shall not pour oil on it - why? Because oil is the light of the world, as Scripture calls it *yitzhar* (like *tzohar* - a light or an illuminated stone); yet she loved the dark, so there may be no light in her flour offering. And he shall not place frankincense upon it: for frankincense is a reminder of the matriarchs, as is said "I will betake me to the mount of myrrh"- these are the fathers of the world; "and to the hill of frankincense" - these are the mothers; and this woman diverged from their path. Their remembrance shall not be in her offering, for frankincense is called remembrance.

**12. צאינה וראינה טז-יח**

One should not pour oil on the flour, as they used to pour on other meal offerings, because she did her deed in the dark with a strange man. Therefore, one should not pour oil, which was used to illumine. It should be dark for the woman. They should also not put any frankincense on the sacrifice, because *Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah* were compared to frankincense. The woman had separated herself from *Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah,* with her evil deeds. **Rashi, Numbers, 5:15.*