

Both Ends of the Book

A Pleasing Fragrance

The Aroma of Sacrifice

ניחוח / נִיחֹחַ

nîychôach soothing, quieting, tranquilizing

“And the priest shall burn as incense the whole of it on the altar for a burnt offering, a fire offering of soothing fragrance to Yehovah.” Lev 1:9 LITV

The burning of an animal is here described as “a soothing fragrance” *rêyach nîychôach*

How does a burning animal, being completely consumed in a fire after having been cut up, produce something where the scent or aroma is “as incense” and soothing, quieting and tranquilizing?

It is not the smoke of the offering that is pleasing, but the offering itself. This reference in Leviticus 1:9 is paralleled with Chapter 2 verse 2: “And the priest shall burn it as incense on the altar, a memorial offering, a fire offering, a soothing fragrance to Yehovah.”

Same effect, however in this case it is a grain offering given as flour with oil and frankincense. Again, it is not the smoke but the intent that produces the “soothing fragrance to Yehovah.”

It is in the redemption of those who have been estranged from their Creator by sin, returning to him with an offering for that sin, that produces the soothing fragrance. Even in the large sacrifice prescribed during the Feast of Weeks (most of us call this Pentecost - Greek for fifty while the biblical name “weeks” relates to seven weeks of seven days plus one or fifty). Leviticus 23:18 directs:

“And besides the bread, you shall offer seven lambs, without blemish, sons of a year, and one bull, a son of the herd, and two rams; they are a burnt offering to Yehovah, with their food offering and their drink offerings, a fire offering of soothing fragrance to Jehovah.”

Even offerings to false gods had a “pleasing aroma” to their god as in Ezekiel 6:13

“And you shall know that I am Yehovah when their slain shall be in the midst of their idols all around their altars, on every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, (the place where they gave there a soothing aroma to all their idols).” LITV

It doesn't stop there though, only being found within the Hebrew Scriptures and connected with animal and other sacrifices.

Ephesians 5:2 commands us to be like Messiah “And walk in love, as Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Paul, writing to the followers of Messiah in Philippi mentions that “even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again,” being sacrificial in their own lives in order to meet his needs (Philippians 4:16). Then in 4:18 he says, “I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”

Again, a fragrant offering in the form of a sacrifice.

We also carry a fragrance within ourselves.

“But thanks be to God, who in Messiah always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us reveals everywhere the aroma of the knowledge of Himself. For we are the aroma of Messiah to God, among those who are being saved and those who are perishing — to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. Who is competent for these things?” 2 Corinthians 2:14 - 16 TLV

This theme carries throughout the Bible from one end of revelation to the other. And at the end of the biblical revelation we find something parallel in our prayers.

“Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden incense burner. He was given much incense to offer up along with the prayers of all the kedoshim (saints, holy ones) upon the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the kedoshim, rose before God from the angel’s hand.” Rev. 8:4 - 5 TLV

Our prayers are an offering and even are incense: “When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense—which are the prayers of the kedoshim.” Rev. 5:8

We are now the priesthood making offerings: “As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua.” 1 Peter 2:4 - 5 TLV

And we ourselves are now an offering.

“I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable to God—which is your spiritual service.” Rom. 12:1 TLV

It would follow then that not only are our prayers a fragrant offering, our giving is a fragrant offering, and as we have seen, we carry an aroma of the presence of Messiah. In this case our aroma as a living sacrifice, like all the other sacrifices, is “a soothing fragrance to Yehovah” in that we are now reconciled and in union with our God, pleasing to him.