

## Oils and Spices

Along with the main portions of the Tabernacle and its courtyard, many items were used to service and conduct worship ceremonies in the Tabernacle. From the tools used to clean and trim the lamps on the Golden Lampstand to the plates and cups used by the priests as they ate their portions of the sacrifices, all had to be made and sanctified to their intended purpose. The anointing with Holy Oil, made by God's formula, was used to sanctify (set apart) people and things used in offices that He authorized. In the Tabernacle, and later the Temple service, the priests and everything used by the priests were anointed and kept sacred by the priests. It set them apart from routine, everyday life and service, devoting them to specific service to God.

All anointings were specific in nature. We read of Samuel anointing David to be King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). The LORD commanded Elisha, *"Anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place"* (1 Kings 19:15-16). Three of these men were anointed with oil, and Elisha was anointed with the prophet's cloak. For each, the naming of their job defined their duties. Because of its spiritual, God commanded use; the oil had to be different from any other oil used by the people. In the same way, the oil used in the Golden Lamps providing light to the Holy Place had to be different from the cheaper oil used in the people's abodes.

God specified the oil for the Lamps by commanding Moses, *"You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually"* (Exodus 27:20). The difference from common olive oil is the specification "beaten olives." The standard method to extract oil was pressing, using stone wheels, and crushing the olives against a flat base. This method produced more oil but also included fragments from both the olive and the press. The very best oil, burning cleaner, brighter, and longer, called "pure, beaten olive oil," was produced by a simple process before the olives were put into the press. First, the olives were placed in a mortar and beaten until they were well bruised and began to shed their oil. They were then transferred to strainer baskets where they "bled" oil. The uncontaminated beaten oil was stored in earthenware jars, and the remaining pulp was moved to the olive press. Only the first drippings of the olives, the beaten oil, were used in the Tabernacle.

Today we use the term uncontaminated from the world to refer to the ideal condition of a Christian. The bread we consume during the Lord's Supper is unleavened. It was baked without leaven, and the flour was uncontaminated with mold or dirt. The fruit of the vine we use is also free of contamination and fermentation. The fruit is crushed, squeezed, and strained to remove all solids from the juice. We no longer need the oil to burn in lamps, but the care taken in the processes guides us as we prepare the bread and cup we partake of every first day of each week.

In addition, some of the beaten olive oil was mixed with spices for the Anointing Oil. *"Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. "You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil"* (Exodus 30:23-25). This special anointing oil, combining the fruit of the olive tree with the spices from other trees, could only be used on objects and people selected by God for specific purposes. It sanctified priests, kings, and the articles of the Tabernacle and Temple. The people could not use it for common purposes under

the penalty of being cut off from the people. *"It shall not be poured on anyone's body, nor shall you make any like it in the same proportions; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. 'Whoever shall mix any like it or whoever puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people'"* (Exodus 30:32-33).

In describing the uses for the Holy Anointing Oil, God said, *"With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. "You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy. "You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me"* (Exodus 30:26-30).

What sanctifies us for God's service today? *"But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11).