

Stories with a Twist [40]

"A Poor Man Came Along..." (Insights into Leviticus Rabbah 3:5)



Background to Our Story

Voluntary Sacrifices in the Torah



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A peace offering is an offering expressing thanks or gratitude to God for His bounties and mercies. The Hebrew term for this type of offering is zebach sh'lamim (or sometimes just sh'lamim), which is related to the word shalom, meaning "peace" or "whole." A representative portion of the offering is burnt on the altar, a portion is given to the kohanim, and the rest is eaten by the donor and his family; thus, everyone gets a part of this offering. This category of offerings includes thanksgiving-offerings (in Hebrew, Todah, which was obligatory for survivors of life-threatening crisis), free will-offerings, and offerings made after fulfillment of a vow.

Ox



Endive



The Text: Leviticus Rabbah 3:5

מעשה בשור אחד שהיו מושכין לקרבן ולא נמשך, בא עני ובניו אנדה אחת של טרוקסימא והושיט לו ואכלה ונעש השור והוציא מחט ונמשך לקרבן, נראה לבעל השור בחלומו, קרבנו של עני קדמה.

There was once an incident involving an ox, that [people] were trying to pull it along to offer as a sacrifice, but it refused to be pulled.

A poor man came by with a bundle of endives in his hand. He stretched out his hand and [the animal] ate it, and the ox coughed and expelled a needle that had been lodged in its gullet, and after that it was agreeable to being pulled along to be offered as a sacrifice.

That night [a Heavenly message] appeared to the owner of the ox, saying to him, "The offering of the poor man took precedence over yours!"



Explaining the Story (What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did the ox refuse to be pulled?

? How did the poor man make the ox move?

Bonus ? What do you think is the social status of the owner of the ox? **?**

Can you find some hints in the text to your answer?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

? What was the poor man doing with the bundle of endives in his hand?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? What indications can we find in our story pointing out to the fact that the owner of the ox was not altogether present while his ox was being led to be sacrificed?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

More Analysis Questions

Bonus ? What prompted the poor man to hold the bundle of endives towards the ox?

? What was the poor man's sacrifice?

? Why was a message revealed [in a dream] to the owner of the ox?

Extra Bonus ? Why was no message revealed [in a dream] to the poor man?

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! As the Saying Goes: Attitude is Everything!

EPILOGUE

Our short simple story contrasts the expensive offering of the rich man with the poor gift of the poor man. Moreover, while oxen are the most expensive offerings available to an individual, a bundle of endives doesn't even qualify as the most inexpensive offering.

And yet, our story comes to teach us that God, who probes our hearts, doesn't look at the price tag of our gifts, but at our attitude. Yes, the ox of the rich man is accepted as a gift, but ranks lower in God's appreciation than a bundle of endives of a poor man (probably his lunch or dinner), when given spontaneously and generously with all his heart.