

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [41]

"Do Not Despise Her!" (Insights into Leviticus Rabbah 3:5)



Background to Our Story

Meal Offerings in the Torah (Leviticus 2:1-3)

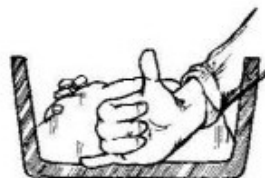
1. And if a person brings a meal offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil over it and place frankincense upon it. 2. And he shall bring it to Aaron's descendants, the kohanim, and from there, he [the kohen] shall scoop out his fistful of its fine flour and its oil, in addition to all its frankincense. Then, the kohen shall cause its remainder to [go up in] smoke on the altar; [it is] a fire offering [with] a pleasing fragrance to the Lord. 3. And what remains of the meal offering shall belong to Aaron and to his descendants; [it is] holy of holies from the fire offerings of the Lord.

Kemitza קמיצה

The *kobain* holds his hand open and vertical, puts it into the *mincha*, folds his three middle fingers against his palm, turns his hand upward and lifts it out of the vessel. The mixture which he now holds is the *kometz*.⁴⁰



Open hand into *mincha*



Folding three middle fingers



Turning hand upward



Lifting hand out

The Text: Leviticus Rabbah 3:5

מעשה באשה אחת שהביאה קמח של סלת, והיה פהו מבנה עליה, ואמר, ראו מה הן מקריבות, מה בנה לאכל, מה בנה להקריב, נראה לפהו בחלום אל תבזה עליה, פאלו נפשה הקריבה.

There was an incident involving a woman who brought a handful of fine flour, and the Kohen despised her, saying: "See what these [women] offer up! What is there in this [minimal] offering that can be eaten? What is there in this [minimal] offering that can be offered up on the altar?"

[A Heavenly message] appeared to the Kohen in a dream, saying to him: "Do not despise her, for it is as if she offered up her very soul!"



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

Comprehension Questions

? Why did the woman bring a handful of fine flour to the Kohen?

? Why did the Kohen despise the woman? What is the "double spurn" of the priest?

Analysis Questions

Bonus ? What indication can we find in our story pointing out to the fact that the woman was poor as opposed to stingy, and that that the woman's poor gift came from her heart?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? What indications can we find in our story pointing out to the fact that the Kohen did not verbalize his despise to the woman? If he didn't address the woman in his despise, whom did he talk to?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? The priest in our story comes across as being insensitive. In addition; what subtle indication can we find in our story pointing out to the

fact that the Kohen was more interested in the material gain than in the spiritual aspect of his vocation?

? Why was the woman regarded as if she had offered up her own soul?

? Why was no message revealed [in a dream] to the woman about the worth of her gift?

? Why wasn't the Kohen of our story punished for his loathsome attitude?

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

! First Lesson: As the Saying Goes: Attitude is Everything!

! Second Lesson: When your values are mixed up, inexorably you are going to misread people!

! Third Lesson: There is no "bad guy" in our story; only a guy who needs to learn a lesson!

EPILOGUE

Our story contrasts the two personalities of the Kohen and the poor woman. The Kohen represents "the establishment," and as someone who is in charge of the Temple, he can compare the "worth" of the many offerings he receives. Unable to read the heart of the poor woman, he despises her meager offering, focusing first on the little benefit he himself will receive from it. The woman, on the other hand, unaware of the Kohen's inner ruminations, brings as a gift from her heart, more than what she can afford, probably at the expense of her own meal.

The average reader gets appalled at the Kohen's loathsome thoughts. God, however, instead of punishing the Kohen, decides to speak to him softly, teaching him a lesson about true generosity and the pitfalls of judging people by the size of their offerings, hoping that the Kohen, will learn it for the future.