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## Stories with a Twist [42]

### "If You Do Not Offer Them Up, You Will Cut Off My Sustenance!"

(Insights into Leviticus Rabbah 3:5)



#### Background to Our Story

##### King Agrippa



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Sota. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 245.

This refers to King Agrippa I, Julius Agrippa, who was the grandson of Herod (10 BCE –44 CE). Agrippa's father was Aristobolus, the son of Herod from his Hasmonean wife, Miriam, the daughter of Hyrcanus II. His mother was Berenice, the daughter of Herod's sister.

He grew up in Rome in the house of the emperor, and there he befriended the emperor's family. He was a close friend of Gaius, who, upon being designated emperor, appointed Agrippa governor over a portion of Herod's kingdom. Agrippa later became one of the driving forces behind Claudius's appointment as emperor, who in turn installed him as ruler over the rest of Herod's kingdom, including the land of Judea. Upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael as king, Agrippa developed a relationship with the Sages of the Jewish people and publicly displayed his deep connection to them through observing the mitzvot scrupulously. The Sages praised him for this. Agrippa attempted to fortify Jerusalem by building an additional wall, which included some of the city's suburbs within the city's limits.

Since the Sages regarded Herod and his household as Canaanite slaves, Agrippa's status as a member of the Jewish people was questionable. Consequently, the Sages viewed the people's words, stating that he was their brother, as mere flattery (see 41b). Agrippa himself was also considered a dubious character. He was raised and educated in Rome among friends who were wanton in every regard, and as king he continued Herod's initiatives of encouraging Greek culture, at least in the gentile cities under his reign.

##### High Priest



Hebrew: kohen gadol, in Judaism, the chief religious functionary in the Temple of Jerusalem, whose unique privilege was to enter the Holy of Holies (inner sanctum)

once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to burn incense and sprinkle sacrificial animal blood to expiate his own sins and those of the people of Israel. On this occasion he wore only white linen garments, forgoing the elaborate priestly vestments worn during the year whenever he chose to officiate at services. The high priest had overall charge of Temple finances and administration, and in the early period of the Second Temple he collected taxes and maintained order as the recognized political head of the nation. The high priest could not mourn the dead, had to avoid defilement incurred by proximity to the dead, and could marry only a virgin. The office, first conferred on Aaron by his brother Moses, was normally hereditary and for life. In the 2nd century BC, however, bribery led to several reappointments, and the last of the high priests were appointed by government officials or chosen by lot. According to tradition, 18 high priests served in Solomon's Temple (c. 960–586 BC) and 60 in the Second Temple (516 BC–AD 70). Since that time, there has been no Jewish high priest, for national sacrifice was permanently interrupted with the destruction of the Second Temple.



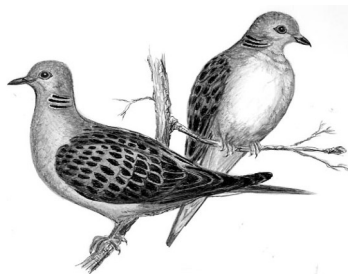
## Olah - Burnt Offerings



<http://www.jewfaq.org>

Perhaps the best-known class of offerings is the burnt offering. It was the oldest and commonest sacrifice, and represented submission to God's will. The Hebrew word for burnt offering is olah, meaning ascension. An olah is completely burnt on the outer altar; no part of it is eaten by anyone. Because the offering represents complete submission to God's will, the entire offering is given to God (i.e., it cannot be used after it is burnt). An olah could be made from cattle, sheep, goats, or even birds, depending on the donor's means.

## Turtledoves



### The Text: Leviticus Rabbah 3:5

אֲגָרִיפֶס הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּקֵּשׁ לְהִקְרִיב בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד אֶלֶף עוֹלוֹת, שְׁלַח וְאָמַר לִפְתָּן גְּדוֹל אֵל יִקְרִיב אָדָם הַיּוֹם חוּץ מִמְּנֵי, בָּא עֲנִי אֶחָד וּבִינְדוּ שְׁתֵּי תוֹרִים, אָמַר לִפְתָּן הַקֶּרֶב אֶת אֱלֹהֵי, אָמַר לוֹ, הַמֶּלֶךְ צוּנִי וְאָמַר לִי אֵל יִקְרִיב אָדָם חוּץ מִמְּנֵי הַיּוֹם. אָמַר לוֹ, אֲדוּנִי כִתְּנָה גְדוֹל, אַרְבַּעַה אֲנִי צָד בְּכָל יוֹם וְאֲנִי מִקְרִיב שְׁנַיִם וּמִתְפָּרֵס מִשְׁנַיִם, אִם אֵי אֶתְּהָ מִקְרִיבֶנָּה אֶתְּהָ חוֹתֶמָה פְּרִנְסָתִי, נִטְלָן וְהִקְרִיבֶנָּה. נִרְאָה לוֹ לְאֲגָרִיפֶס בְּחִלּוֹם קָרְבָן שֶׁל עֲנִי קְדָמָה. שְׁלַח וְאָמַר לִפְתָּן גְּדוֹל, לֹא כָּה צוּיִתִּיהָ אֵל יִקְרִיב אָדָם חוּץ מִמְּנֵי הַיּוֹם. אָמַר לוֹ, אֲדוּנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּא עֲנִי אֶחָד וּבִינְדוּ שְׁתֵּי תוֹרִים, אָמַר לִי הַקֶּרֶב אֵלֵי אֶת אֱלֹהֵי,

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ צוֹנֵי וְאָמַר לִי אֵל יִקְרִיב אֲדָם חוּץ מִמֶּנִּי הַיּוֹם, אָמַר, אֲרַבְעָה אָנִי צֶד בְּכֹל יוֹם  
וְאָנִי מִקְרִיב שְׁנַיִם וּמֵתִפְרִינִס מִשְׁנַיִם, אִם אֵי אַתָּה מִקְרִיב אַתָּה חוּתֶךָ אֶת פְּרֻזְסָתִי, לֹא הִיָּה לִי  
לְהִקְרִיב. אָמַר לוֹ, יָפָה עָשִׂיתָ כֹּל מֵה שָׁעָשִׂיתָ.

King Agrippa once sought to offer a thousand burnt-offerings in a single day. He [Agrippa] sent a message to the High Priest saying, "Let no one bring any offerings today except for me!"

That day, a poor man came to the Temple with two turtledoves in his hand, and said to the High Priest, "offer up these turtledoves."

He [the High Priest] replied to him, "The King has commanded me, saying to me, 'Let no one bring any offerings today except for me!'"

[The poor man] said to him [to the High Priest], "My master, High Priest! I capture four turtledoves every day; I offer up two of them and I sustain myself with the proceeds of the other two. If you do not offer them up, you will cut off my source of sustenance!"

He [the High Priest] took [the two turtledoves] and offered them up.

[A Heavenly message] appeared to Agrippa in a dream, saying to him, "The sacrifice of a poor man has taken precedence over yours!"

[Agrippa] sent a message to the High Priest, saying, "Did I not instruct you that no one should bring any offerings today except for me?"

[The High Priest] told him, "My master, the king! A poor man came with two turtledoves in his hand, and said to me, offer up these two turtledoves.' – I said to him, 'the king has commanded me, saying to me: Let no one bring any offerings today except for me!' – [The poor man] then said to me, 'I capture four turtledoves every day; I offer up two of them and I sustain myself with the proceeds of these two others. If you

do not offer them up, you will cut my source of sustenance!’ – Was I then not to offer them up?”

[Agrippa] said to him [to the High Priest], “*Indeed*, everything you did, you did properly!”



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

### Comprehension Questions

**Bonus ?** Why did King Agrippa wish to offer up a thousand burnt offerings in one day? What does the beginning of our story tell us about King Agrippa?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** Why did King Agrippa send a message to the High Priest saying, “Let no one bring any offerings today except for me!” What does this particular command tell us about King Agrippa?

**Bonus ?** Why did the poor man come with two turtledoves to be sacrificed on the same day that King Agrippa had commanded that no man other than himself should offer sacrifices?

**?** Do you think the poor man of our story was the only one to come to offer sacrifices on the day that King Agrippa had commanded that no man other than himself should offer sacrifices? If not? What happened to all the others?

**Bonus ?** Why do you think the High Priest was available, as opposed to a regular priest, to receive the poor man’s request?

**Bonus ?** How does the High Priest first react to the poor man’s request to sacrifice the two turtledoves? Why?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Bonus ?** Please explain the poor man’s logic in his assertion to the high Priest: “My master, High Priest! I capture four turtledoves every day; I offer up two of them and I sustain myself with the proceeds of the other two. If you do not offer them up, you will cut off my source of sustenance!”

**Bonus ?** How does the High Priest react to the poor man's assertion to sacrifice the turtledoves? Why?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**? ?** Why doesn't the High Priest look for King Agrippa's "blessing" before transgressing his command?

**Extra Bonus ?** Why doesn't the High Priest reveal immediately to King Agrippa what transpired with the poor man and his request?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus ?** Why does a Heavenly message appear to Agrippa in a dream, saying to him *"The sacrifice of a poor man has taken precedence over yours!"*?

**? ?** How does King Agrippa find out that his command to the High Priest was not respected? How does he react?

**? ?** How does the High Priest appeal to King Agrippa's understanding and indulgence?

**? ?** Why was King Agrippa persuaded by the High Priest's honest answer?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### **More Analysis Questions**

*"...Ben Zoma said...Who is strong? He who conquers his inclination, as it is said: (Proverbs 16:32) 'Better is one slow to anger than a strong man, and one who rules over his spirit than a conqueror of a city'" (Mishna Avot 4:1).*

**? ?** Who are the "strong ones" in our story? Why?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**? ?** We know what the poor man's gift was. What was the High Priest's gift? What was King Agrippa's gift?

**? ?** How is the poor man of our story different from the High Priest and King Agrippa?

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

- ! Always Remember: The Strength of Convictions is Contagious!

### EPILOGUE

Our story presents us with three characters: a powerful and conceited king, who is accustomed to getting his will done; a fearful High Priest who listens more to the voice of power than to the voice of his conscience, and a poor man with a big heart and a faith that moves mountains.

The daily routine of the *Temple* is disturbed when the conceited king demands exclusive approach to the Divine. Everybody is ready to comply, with the exception of a poor man, who doesn't understand too much about power games and politics, but whose simple conviction and innocent faith have the power to reach the Throne of Glory and to sway the complacent High Priest and the conceited king.

At the end of our story, the High Priest finds within himself the courage to do the right thing and the king's heart becomes softer; and all that because of the faith and the strength of convictions of the poor man.

### Appendix



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5ZD-QnFJZo>