

# OFFERING TO ALTER THE COURSE OF HISTORY

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

"Command Aaron and his sons saying, 'This is the law of the olah (1) offering.'" (Vayikra/ Leviticus 6:2) The Medrash explains exegetically that a component of the command is "saying", that the Children of Israel are instructed to occupy themselves with reading these verses that dictate the requirements of the offering. In addition to the consumption of the offering facilitating achievement of atonement and elevation, the study of this chapter - the words that spur the striving Jew to action - generates identical results.

The Chofetz Chaim (2) expounds that in our era, when (because of our errant ways) we do not have the Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple in Jerusalem) in which to serve G-d with our offerings, we still possess the opportunity to study their laws and utilize that effort in their stead. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to study the relevant Torah selections to merit the Divine protection needed to insulate us from our enemies. Indeed, their power is greater still.

The Talmud (Megilla 16a) expounds that as Haman prepared to fulfill the royal decree to dress Mordechai in the King's garb and parade him about the capital (Esther 6), the Sages of Shushan were sitting before Mordechai, reviewing the laws of measuring the kemitza, the fistful of flour of the mincha offering. Upon Haman's inquiry into their topic, they explained that this offering was a vehicle for atonement in the Temple. Replied Haman: "Your fistful of flour has come and pushed aside my ten thousand silver talents (that I offered King Achashvairosh for the right to annihilate the Jews)."

At that most challenging time, mere moments before Esther would approach the King to reveal her identity and request the reversal of Haman's decree, how could the Rabbis be studying the mundane and still-dormant laws of the mincha flour measure? Rather, concludes the Chofetz Chaim, lacking the Temple, the study itself gains atonement, to such an extent that Haman was not only rendered harmless, but was forced to concede Mordechai's upper hand.

Our physical world, by its construct, challenges our ability to find and maintain our connection with G-d. The Kabbalists explain that the Hebrew for "world" - "olam" - derives from "he'elam", meaning "hidden"; our physical world hides the spiritual realities from our consciousness. Our life's challenge and charge is to cut through the fog of physicality to forge our spiritual connections, to appreciate that G-d's spiritual realm is reality and it is we who live in the imaginary. Little has changed since Mordechai and his fellow Sages had to see through G-d's concealment to appreciate that the sequence of chance events they were experiencing was actually the exquisite unfolding of the Divine plan. And we, like they, have the power - through our prayer, through our repentance and

with our "offerings" - to redirect the course of history.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) literally: elevation; the olah is an offering that is completely consumed on the altar to atone for an unfulfilled positive command or unfulfilled sinful thoughts, or brought by one wishing to elevate his spiritual level

(2) Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities

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