

SACRIFICE BY LEARNING TORAH

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"Command Aharon and his children, saying 'this is the law of the Elevation Offering...' [6:2]

The Medrash comments upon the "command" to be "saying:" "Saying -- meaning that you should say to the Children of Israel that they should involve themselves in reading about the Elevation Offering [Olah]," learning and speaking about it. Similarly, we find in the Talmud (Menachos 110) "this is the law [Torah] of the Elevation Offering -- anyone who involves himself in Torah study, it is as if he has offered an Elevation Offering."

If a person could not afford an Elevation Offering, or in our day -- when we have no Temple to which to bring one -- we can involve ourselves in Torah study, and it is as if we brought a sacrifice! Such is the tremendous power of Torah study. It has the power to change a person, just as bringing a sacrifice in the Temple was supposed to change a person -- to make one consider and change bad behavior and character.

While no formula is guaranteed if a person wishes to resist, there is no question that Torah study has the power to transform and benefit a person, even in ways too great for us to recognize.

There is an interesting connection between our parsha and the Purim story, found in Tractate Megillah 16. Haman had a gallows erected in order to hang Mordechai, but when he went to the King to ask for permission to do so, the King turned to him and asked him what should be done to a person whom the King wished to honor. Thinking that the King was obviously talking about him, Haman set up an entire parade for the honored party, who would be dressed in clothing which the King had worn, riding on a horse which the King had rode upon. The King immediately told Haman to carry out every instruction -- honoring Mordechai, who had saved the King's life by revealing an assassination plot.

The Talmud tells us that when Haman went looking for Mordechai in order to dress him and place him on the horse, he found him in -- where else -- the House of Study, where Mordechai was teaching the other Rabbis about the laws of the Meal-Offering [Mincha], specifically the way that the Kohen would extract a small amount between his fingers and place it upon the Altar, found in our parsha immediately after the Elevation Offering. He asked Mordechai what he was discussing, and Mordechai responded that when the Temple was standing, a person would bring a small portion of flour, and a pinch of flour would atone for him. Haman said, "that pinch of yours will come and push back the 10,000 silver pieces of mine [which Haman had offered the King for the privilege of killing

the Jews]!"

We can never even pretend to understand the full impact of what Haman was saying, but just study, just discussing a pinch of flour, thoroughly intimidated Haman. He realized that something tremendous was happening, which he could not beat.

We have the opportunity, every day, to take that power into our own hands, to transform ourselves and transform the world. Let's not waste that opportunity!

Good Shabbos,
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