

## **When a person offers a meal-offering to Hashem...And he (the Kohen) shall scoop his three-fingersful from it, from its fire-flour and from its oil, as well as from its frankincense; And the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar.... (2:1,2)**

The *Torah* begins the laws of the *Korban Minchah*, meal-offering. While the *Torah* lists five varieties of voluntary, personal meal-offerings, they all consist of the same basic ingredients: finely ground wheat flour, oil, and frankincense. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, infers from the word "*minchah*," which in the Hebrew language means "gift" or "tribute," that the meal-offering proclaims the owner's acknowledgment that his life and all he has is a gift from the Almighty. Grain, a staple of the human diet, represents our very existence. Oil symbolizes comfort, and the frankincense alludes to joy, both gifts from Hashem. We have only to recognize their source and appreciate them.

*Chazal* recount a fascinating story in the *Talmud Megillah* 16. They relate how the wicked Haman was searching for Mordechai in order to carry out the king's decree that he take Mordechai through the streets dressed in royal garb. He found Mordechai teaching *Torah* to a group of students, specifically about the laws of *kemitzah*, the three-fingersful offering which was placed upon the *Mizbayach*. Haman questioned Mordechai, "What are you studying?" "We are studying the laws of *kemitzah*. In the times of our *Bais Hamikdash*, one would take a small scoop, place it upon the Altar, and it would serve as an atonement," was Mordechai's response. Haman scoffingly rejoindered, "Let your '*kemitzah*' attempt to push aside my ten thousand silver talents." Haman was telling Mordechai, "Let us see if your little bit of flour has the power to override my decree backed by ten thousand silver talents."

Obviously a more significant message can be derived from this interchange. **Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl**, suggests a noteworthy interpretation of their dialogue. Despondency and depression must have engulfed Mordechai when he saw the wicked Haman before him. Here was the man whose one goal in life was to use his guile and power to totally destroy every living Jew. What made matters worse for Mordechai was that the single antidote to Haman's decree--adherence to Hashem's *Torah*--was not prevalent among the Jews. Most of the people had assimilated. They not only went to Achashverosh's banquet, they enjoyed themselves eating whatever foods they desired, acting in a manner unbecoming *Torah* Jews. Only a small, insignificant group of Jews, "Mordechai's people," resolutely maintained their conviction, not acceding to the dominant, rampant assimilation. What could this small group do? How could they succeed in counteracting Haman's decree?

The lesson of the *kemitzah* gave Mordechai hope. The bitter cup of fear and despondency transformed into a cup of consolation and encouragement when Mordechai realized that his small group of dedicated and determined Jews was essentially no different than the *kemitzah*. The

*Kohanim* consumed the *Korban Minchah* almost completely --almost--except for one little bit: the *kemitzah*. The only part of the meal-offering which is placed upon the *Mizbayach* is the *kemitzah*. Yet, this insignificant "sacrifice" influences the atonement. While it is minute in quantity, its effect is overwhelming! Imagine the power and effect of a small amount if it is sacrificed upon the *Mizbayach*.

This was Mordechai's lesson. Regardless of their number, in spite of their size, if people are committed and willing to sacrifice themselves for their ideals, then they have the potential to save *Klal Yisrael*. Our strength has never been in numbers, but rather in conviction. Our power has never been in quantity but rather in commitment to Hashem and His *Torah*. When Mordechai told this to Haman, his response was atypical. Haman's arrogance was humbled; his strength weakened. He told Mordechai, "You are right. The power of your *kemitzah* is sufficient to overcome my ten thousand silver talents. I cannot defeat you with physical strength as long as even a small segment of your people remain steadfastly committed to serving Hashem. That relatively small number of *Torah* observant Jews has the power to undermine all of my efforts.."