

OUR DAILY CHALLENGE

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM said to Moshe saying, "Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light." Aaron did so... (Bamidbar 8:1-2)

Aaron did so: To teach you the praise of Aaron that he did not change. (Rashi)

What's so great that Aaron lit the lights? Anybody could do that! Why would he do differently from what he understood with perfect clarity G-d had told him to do?

The Sefas Emes offers an answer that not only did Aaron not deviate in the behavior of lighting the first time but for all forty years in the desert he maintained the same high degree of intensity and enthusiasm as if it was the first and only time. Our question is, "How does one dream of doing that?" Aren't we naturally dulled by repetitive experiences? How can an action remain fresh and alive after so many years?

Here's a story my wife, for some mystical reason, likes me to tell. There was a young married man who was learning Torah for many years. He was climbing in learning and stature. As his beard grew long and began to gray his coat became longer and his hat brim widened. One day when his wife asked him to take out the garbage he insisted that it was not befitting his honor to do such a thing anymore. His wife protested and he agreed that he would ask the head of the Yeshiva what should be the proper conduct.

The young scholar spelled out the problem to the elder Rabbi who understood right away the seriousness of the situation. He told the young man, "You are right! It is certainly not befitting your honor anymore to take out the garbage!" Satisfied, the young scholar shared the news with his wife during dinner time that evening. She was a bit surprised but if that's what the Rabbi decided she would have to accept it. Just then, a knock came to the door. It was the head Rabbi of the Yeshiva. "What was he doing here, now?" They wondered. He asked where the garbage was and proceeded to carry it out of the house. They were aghast. "What is the Rabbi doing?" asked the man. "I'm taking out the garbage!" was the Rabbi's reply! "I thought you told me it wasn't fitting my honor to take out the garbage!?" the man asked in wonderment, to which the Rabbi answered, "It's not befitting your honor! This is too big of a job for someone who is concerned about his own honor! I'll take out the garbage!"

The Talmud in Tractate Yuma relates how the young Kohanim, the children of Aaron, would compete daily for the opportunity to remove the ashes from the Altar each morning. This prize

amounts to not more than the act of "taking out the garbage" but in the context of the Holy Temple it is suddenly tinged with excitement! I think we can understand why.

About violations the Chovos Halevavos writes, "Don't look at the smallness of the violation but rather at the greatness of HASHEM against Whom you have sinned. Don't rejoice that no person recognizes or has discovered your ill-intentions but rather you should mourn that the Creator knows what you have hidden." When it comes to doing Mitzvos this phrase has equal application. No job is too small for the truly great person. If the stage of the event places one before the gaze of the Creator then no job is insignificant and deed at risk of become dull even through repetition.

Our sages have already cautioned that, "All your deeds should be done for the sake of heaven!" (Pirke Avos) The Kotzker Rebbe redoubled the warning that your- "for the sake of heaven" -intention should also be "for the sake of heaven". Therein is found the greatness of Aaron's lifetime achievement and our daily challenge. Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.