

DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape# 183, Candle Lighting on Friday Night. Good Shabbos!

Do It Right The First Time!

Towards the end of Parshas Titzaveh, the Torah discusses the concept of "Chanukas HaBayis" -- the anointing of the Mishkan and the various vessels and furniture used within the Mishkan. In general, we have a principle concerning the utensils of the Mishkan that "Avodasam m'chanchasam" -- their usage consecrates them.

The Torah explains the ceremony of consecrating the altar [Shemos 29:38- 39] -- "And this is what you must do for the altar: (Offer) two yearling sheep each day consistently." Every single day that the Beis HaMikdash was in existence -- including Shabbos and Yom Kippur -- a sheep was brought each morning and each afternoon.

This portion of the Korban Tamid, which we say everyday in davening, is repeated one other place in the Torah -- in Parshas Pinchas. There, [Bamidbar 28:1-4] we find virtually the same instructions verbatim as we find in Titzaveh, with one slight difference. In our Parsha, which refers to the first time the Korban Tamid was brought, it says "es hakeves HAechad" (**The** one sheep) and in Pinchas which refers to the ongoing commandment to bring these offerings, it merely says "es hakeves echad" (one sheep). In Pinchas, the verse is missing what is known in Hebrew as the "Hay Hayediya" (the letter Hay as a prefix which calls attention to the following word). Why the difference?

The Brisker Rav, zt"l, said that the Torah is hinting at something here. Throughout the history of the Beis HaMikdash, the morning Korban Tamid and the evening Korban Tamid were totally independent. If, for some reason, one could not be brought, the other was still brought. It was analogous to Tephillin shel Yad and Tephillin shel Rosh. If for some reason one can not wear one, he still must put on the other.

However, there was one exception to this rule -- the first time the Korban was brought. The very first Korban Tamid, which "dedicated" the altar had to be brought as part of a pair. If one failed to bring

the morning offering, one could not bring the afternoon offering. That is why in our portion, dealing with the dedicating offering, the verse uses the Hay Hayediya -- **The** sheep.

The Shemen HaTov explains the ethical lesson to be learned from this law. We see from here that whenever one starts doing something, it must be done right. Beginnings are extremely important. In order to set the tone for something that is going to last for years and years, it must be done correctly and not "half-baked." Therefore, even though, throughout the generations, the two sacrifices were not mutually indispensable (ainam m'akvim zeh es zeh), when the institution of the Korban Tamid was started it had to be started right.

That is why we have a Hebrew expression: "all beginnings are difficult" (kol hascholos kashos). The initial effort has to be done in the most perfect manner, because it sets the tone.

It is said over in the name of the Vilna Gaon that if a community is so meticulous when they build a synagogue, that the ax handles are only crafted by G-d fearing individuals, then there is a guarantee that all prayers offered in that synagogue will be recited with the utmost concentration and dedication (kavanah). If every act, from the onset of the construction, is done 100% right, it is an entirely different synagogue.

I remember when the present Beis Hamedrash in Ner Israel was built. The Rosh Yeshiva -- Rav Ruderman -- zt"l, said that we should not speak idle words (devarim betelim) in that Beis Hamedrash -- at least for the first week. The reason is the same. How we would act that first week would set the tone for that Beis Medrash for generations and generations of students who would come through those doors.

Beginnings are crucial. How one starts a child off; how one begins to learn with his child; how one starts off a marriage; how one starts any endeavor should be good and right and correct... because beginnings set the tone.

There is an fascinating Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin [44b]:

When the Jews came into Eretz Yisroel for the first time, they conquered the city of Jericho. Yehoshua placed a Cherem that no article from that city should be used. The booty was to remain Holy to G-d. There was one individual named Achan who stole something for his own personal use. As a result of that, when the Jews went on to conquer their second city, the city of HaAi, soldiers fell in battle. G-d was angry with the Jewish people. They needed to find out who was responsible and punish him. The verse relates that after Achan was stoned, "G-d's Anger subsided" [Yehoshua 7:26].

The Gemara says that, technically, because of that sin of Achan, the Jewish people should have been destroyed! The only reason that they were not destroyed was that when Avraham Avinu came into Eretz Yisroel for the first time, he built an altar between Beis El and HaAi and he davened there. This prayer of Avraham was an antidote for the subsequent sin of Achan.

What was so terrible about what Achan did? Yes, he was not supposed to touch the spoils of

Jericho, but what was so bad that the Jewish people should have been destroyed had it not been for Avraham Avinu's prayer?

The answer is because that was the first battle. This was their initial entry into Eretz Yisroel. This first battle had to be done right. Yehoshua wanted to make the first entry into the land perfect -- the city was to be conquered and everything in it was to be holy.

One man ruined it. One man ruined the beginning and the Jewish people should have been destroyed. The only thing that saved them was that there was a 'beginning before the beginning.' When Avrohom Avinu came into Eretz Yisroel hundreds of years earlier, he made the beginning right -- he davened between Beis El and HaAi.

So many of our beginnings are done inadvertently. We don't remember the first time we read Aleph-Beis; we don't remember the first time we learned a pasuk in Chumash; we don't remember the first amud of Gemarah we learned; we don't remember our first experiences of marriage.

For some of us our first beginnings are gone, and there is nothing we can do about them. But there are still beginnings left in our lives. If they are not our beginnings, they are our children's beginnings. If not our children's beginnings, then our grandchildren's beginnings. Let us not forget the importance of a beginning and how we can set the tone for generations by doing it right the first time.

Glossary

Korban Tamid -- Constant Offering (offered twice daily in the Temple)

Tephillin shel Yad (Rosh) -- Phylacteries worn on the hand (head)

Beis HaMedrash -- Torah Study Hall

Eretz Yisroel -- the Land of Israel

Cherem -- ban or excommunication

Personalities & Sources:

Brisker Rav -- R. Yitzchak Ze'ev (Velvel) Soloveitchik (1887-1959); took over from his father (R. Chaim Soloveitchik) in Brisk; escaped during World War II to Eretz Yisroel.

Shemen HaTov -- Rabbi Dov Weinberger-contemporary author, Rov in Brooklyn, NY

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Baltimore, Maryland.

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