

# THE KOHEN IS ALWAYS A ROOKIE

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah Tapes: Tape # 499, Davening Quietly. Good Shabbos!

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## **A Homiletic Reading of The Opening Verses of Vayikra**

The parsha begins with the command regarding the Olah offering: Hashem spoke to Moshe: Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the law of the olah-offering. It is the olah-offering that stays on the flame, on the Mizbayach [Altar], all night until the morning, and the fire of the Mizbayach shall be kept aflame on it. [Vayikra 6:1-2]

Within this pasuk, the Medrash finds an allusion to a person who is haughty (a baal gayvah). The Medrash interprets the phrase "olah" (literally that which goes up) as a person who holds himself on high, deriving from this, that such a person eventually inherits Gehinnom [hell] -- he will remain on the flames all night.

The Chassidic work Vayedaber Moshe gives a further insight to this pasuk. If the word "olah" refers to a "baal gayvah" we can say, he argues that the pasuk is hinting at the downfall of every conceited person. "This (Zos) is the Torah of the 'baal gayvah'" The word "ZOS" (meaning 'THIS is the way it has to be') is the downfall of every haughty individual. He is never willing to compromise. He is never willing to give in. It is always ZOS -- my way, or the highway!

Unfortunately, this is a cause so many times for friction in marriages. People are unbending and unyielding. This stems from an underlying conceit. Success in many of life's endeavors and particularly in life's relationships boils down to midos (character traits). The Baalei Mussar said in effect: A man's character is his fate. However we formulate this idea, it is a fact. A person's midos determines how he is going to do on the job, how he will do in marriage, how he will do in raising children.

"ZOS" -- always insisting on THIS way is Toras haOlah, the practice of the one who holds himself on high. Unfortunately -- as the Medrash points out -- such a person does not wind up in a positive fashion in the World of Truth.

## **The Kohen Is Always A Rookie**

The next pasukim in the parsha teach the laws of the removal of the ashes: "The Kohen shall don his fitted linen Tunic, and he shall don linen pants on his flesh; he shall raise the ashes which the fire will consume of the olah-offering on the Mizbayach, and place it next to the Mizbayach. He shall remove his garments and shall wear other garments, and shall remove the ashes to the outside of the camp, to a pure place." [Vayikra 1:3-4]

The Beis HaMikdash was a very busy place. Starting with the offering of the morning Tamid sacrifice throughout the day, there was constant activity on the Mizbayach as the various private or communal offerings were brought. People who own their own business and office managers know that there is always a set routine that begins the start of each business day. Whether it be turning on the heat or the air-conditioning or flipping on the computer or other equipment, there is always a standard procedure that is the first thing that is done to begin the daily cycle of any busy operation. The first thing that they did in the Beis HaMikdash was to remove the previous days' ashes to outside the camp.

This was not just a matter of practicality -- that if they did not remove the ashes each day, the Mizbayach would get stuffed up. There may well have been room to accumulate several days' worth of ashes before cleaning out the Mizbayach. Nevertheless, this service of "Terumas HaDeshen" (Literally, 'the offering of the ashes') was the first thing that the Kohen did in the Beis HaMikdash every single morning.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch sees great symbolism in this. The message of the Terumas HaDeshen, he says, is that every day is a fresh beginning. One must begin anew, as it were, every single day. In matters of spirituality there is no resting on one's laurels, no such thing as saying "yesterday we had a banner day in the Beis HaMikdash." Yesterday is gone. Today is a new beginning. There is no concept of relaxing -- of being able to "take it a little easy today" because I accomplished so much yesterday. Each day we wipe the slate clean and start over.

In Rav Hirsch's words: "The thought of what has already been accomplished can be the death of that which is still to be accomplished. Woe unto him who, with smug self-complacency, thinks he can rest on his laurels, on what he has already achieved, and who does not meet the task of every fresh day with full fresh devotion as if it were the first day of his life's work! Every trace of yesterday's sacrifice is to be removed from the hearth on the Mizbayach so that the service of the new day can be started on completely fresh ground." This is a powerful statement.

This is the message of the Terumas HaDeshen: "A new day, a new beginning. Today you are a rookie again. You must prove yourself again." This is why the daily Temple Service that symbolically represents all Divine Service always begins with taking out yesterday's ashes.

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This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion

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