

Dvar Torah for Parshat Tzav

written by breslov.org

March 25, 2023



Based on Chayey Moharan/Tzaddik #172 (46)

...the Altar's fire shall be ignited with [the offerings' remains]...he shall remove the ashes of the burnt offerings consumed by the fire...he shall take [them] to a ritually pure place outside the camp. The fire of the Altar shall be ignited...Each morning the kohen will kindle...In this way, there will be a constant fire burning on the Altar; it will not be extinguished (Leviticus 6:2–6).

We all have a very human problem: the initial enthusiasm runs out. This is not a bad thing when it comes to a poker game, but for a Jew serious about his Jewishness, it is an occupational hazard. Even we, as holy as we are, can't capture lightning in a bottle. But there are solutions.

Most of forget that we serve as kohanim (priests) in God's Temple. True the Temple, the Beit HaMikdash, is in ruins, and maybe you're not descended from a kohen who served there (or

are otherwise ineligible), but nonetheless, a kohen you are (see Exodus 19:6) in the temple that is the world (Zohar, passim). Part of a kohen's job is keeping the fire on the Altar burning at all times. That entails removing the ashes and lighting it anew every morning or, in our situation, as often as necessary.

Where does the fiery heat, the inspiration, come from? Motion generates heat; thought generates motion. Holy thought generates holy motion (Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #156). To keep the fire burning in our heart, we have to keep our minds regularly engaged in Torah study.

There is no expiration date on the information, faith, holiness or anything we've gained from our Torah study. So even after its inspiration has burned out and turned into "ash," we use the embers to kindle a new round of inspired, inspiring Torah study. After that, the pile of ashes that has grown on the Altar is treated with great respect. Instead of dumping it unceremoniously, we make sure to take it to a "ritually pure place." That's the simple meaning.

The Hebrew word for ashes, deshen, also means richness, fatty (Metzudot on Psalms 23:6 and Proverbs 15:30) and elevated (Likutey Moharan II, Lesson #80). On a deeper level, the "ashes" are so rich with holiness we have to elevate them to a higher level, "outside the camp" and realm of ordinary life, to a dimension that is completely pure, untainted by the vagaries of the physical.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that it's not good to be old, that at no point can we let the fire go out (Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #51). We need to perpetuate our initial enthusiasm, a la the Rebbe Reb Zusha, so that it infuses our entire Jewishness (Tzaddik #518). Our Torah study is necessary, a solution that will definitely help.

And so will this second solution: plugging into Rebbe

Nachman's teachings and path. As the Rebbe said (Tzaddik #172), "My fire will burn forever. It will never be extinguished. It will burn until Mashiach comes"—may it be swiftly and soon, in our lifetime. Amen.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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