

In this Torah portion, Tzav, we learn how the High Priest was given the job of removing the ashes. He was to dress in full regalia and every morning remove the ashes from the Tameed. The daily sacrifice which was given morning and evening on behalf of the Jewish people. Everyone shared equally in the Tameed. We can understand how the High Priest would represent the people on Yom Kippur but what is this about his having to lift up the ashes? Actually people misunderstand the sacrificial system. It was not meant to forgive people who had committed a sin on purpose. For what we now call sin it had no function. Its purpose was to make people feel psychologically pure. After they would run up against things that were not their fault but for which they would still feel guilty. For example, if a little boy would run in front of a person's car and he did everything he could to prevent a collision a person would not have done anything wrong but he would still feel terrible. Sacrifices were meant to rid a person of this psychological bad feeling. Lifting up the ashes is important. We have to put back the enthusiasm and optimism and hope and joy in life. This was the High Priests' role. Unfortunately, today many people try to pretend that they are not psychologically affected by different events. A mother I knew when her husband died suddenly refused to let her son mourn. She made him do everything he usually did. In a few years he wound up in a mental hospital. We need to feel psychologically whole and religion helps us do this. It helps us remove the ashes. The High Priests' role was not just ceremonial. It was also to give the people hope and turn the ashes into enthusiasm and warmth.

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The story about a man who was walking down a dark alley and was accosted by a robber. They fought for over an hour. Finally the robber pinned the man down and took his wallet. Inside he found \$1.00. The robber looked at the man and said, "You mean you fought so hard all this time for just a dollar?" The man said, "Oh, I thought you wanted the \$500 bill in my shoe." Many times in life it is the hidden things that count much more than the open things. It is the slights and trampling on your rights, feelings of being had, etc. This we have to watch out. That's why it says, "Speak to the Sons of Israel saying, 'A soul who will sin by accident in all the Mitzvahs of G-d which should not be done.'" If it is a Mitzvah, why shouldn't it be done? This is to teach us that Mitzvahs also have to be done properly. The hidden attitude, the internal attitude of a human being must be present. There are two aspects to doing a Mitzvah: the subjective act and the feelings. The feelings must be pure and holy, too. The act is still a Mitzvah, but not as great a Mitzvah as it could have been if it had been done with the right attitude.

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In the Torah portion, Tzav, we learn something very strange. We learn how the High Priest was commanded to dress in white linen garments and to remove the ashes every morning from the Altar. This seems very strange. The High Priest was only commanded to do two special things in the Torah. All the rest of the things he could delegate. He was commanded to officiate at the High Holiday services and he was commanded to remove the Doshin, the ashes from the Altar. What type of job was this for the High Priest? Also, the whole Temple service was strange in that the people were denied access to the holiest part of the Sanctuary. We are a democratic religion. We always have been, yet in the Temple services the people could only come to the Altar and even the priests could only go into the holy part of the Sanctuary. The holy of holies the High Priest could only enter on Yom Kippur and only then with his sensor burning so that his vision should be blurred. The whole service of the Temple really revolved around the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were in the holy of holies. This whole emphasis on the limitations of Temple services, I believe, stressed the fact that our knowledge is limited. We cannot know everything. In fact, modern science tells us that today. The whole idea of black holes speaks about the limits of knowledge. Since the Van Heisenberg principle, we do not even know what reality is. The very act of observing reality changes it. We are all limited in our knowledge and understanding. The whole Temple service revolved around the Ten Commandments. The Rabbis ask the question, why were the Ten Commandments given on two tablets? Why weren't they given on one tablet? The answer they give is because the tablets are compared to the bride and bridegroom, to heaven and earth, to this world and the next world, and to the groomsmen, Michael and Gabriel. What kind of answer is that? If we look carefully at Michael and Gabriel we can get a clue to what we are talking about. Michael is the Guardian Angel of Israel. He stands for kindness and compassion. Gabriel is the Angel of Justice. In this world we need both kindness and justice. It is very difficult to balance these two things. We want kindness and compassion and we need it. However, we are not going to go to a brain surgeon who is a nice guy if he is also not a skilled surgeon. We are not going to go to a lawyer who loses every case even if he is compassionate. In this life we have to learn how to reconcile differing views, both of which are right. We have to reconcile heaven and earth. Some people are so filled with ideals and plans to make things

perfect that they forget that they are dealing with human beings. We do not just live in a world of ideals and human beings are not ideals or logical principles. We have to reconcile this world and the next world. In this world in order to live we have to kill other creatures, whether they are animal or vegetable. The very act of eating is a violent act. Finally we have bride and bridegroom. Marriage is a reconciling of differing viewpoints both of which are equally valid. It is not an easy task. The Ten Commandments were given on two tablets because we cannot just look at one thing at a time. We must learn how to reconcile differences. I was struck when I went to Israel by the high pitch and volume of the arguments there. Everybody knew, though, that ultimately they would have to compromise so they were just staking out positions. In Judaism we do not believe in the killer instinct. We have to know when to stop. We never go for the jugular. If the marriage is to last then different points of view must be allowed and, obviously, each party must not go for the jugular. They must know that they have to stop at a certain point. Unfortunately, many young couples do not realize that. They seek an identity of views. This is impossible and not even desirable. Each of us can only see part of the truth. The hardest job of a Rabbi is to deal with people both of which are absolutely right based upon their own perceptions and assumptions. The important thing is that they reconcile their viewpoints and that they do not overstep their bounds and go for the jugular. This ultimately does not serve them and it does not serve truth. The story about a man who came into the bank and he saw a security guard jump a man, handcuff him, and throw him to the ground. Other clerks came hovering around making sure the man did not get up. The man looked at the bank president and said, "My goodness, I have just witnessed my first bank robbery". The president said, "No, you haven't". The man said, "I saw that man handcuffed, etc". The president said, "Oh, no, this is just our substantial penalty for early withdrawal". We must all learn where to stop and how to reconcile conflicting opinions both of which are right.

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# Are You Depriving Your Children of their Yetzer Tov?

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Sacrificing is an essential ingredient in the human makeup. We are all born with the urge to sacrifice. The rabbis tell us that a person is born with a Yetzer HoRah but does not get the Yetzer Tov until he or she is Bar or Bas Mitzvah. The Yetzer HoRah is usually interpreted as the "evil inclination," but what it really means is the urge towards self-gratification. The Yetzer Tov, which is usually translated as the "good inclination," really means the altruistic tendency of human beings.

↓ In the Shema we say "You should love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." The rabbis interpret the expression "with all your might" to mean "with both your inclinations," with your self-gratifying and altruistic inclinations. In fact, they say that in the beginning of creation when G-d refers to His creation as "Tov M'od," it means that G-d saw that both inclinations, the self-gratifying inclination and the altruistic inclination, were good. We need both in order to function in the world, and when the Torah speaks about the creation of man it says "Vayheetzer" "and G-d created." The word is spelled here with two Yuds, which means that G-d created us for His purposes and for our own good with both these inclinations.

It is not true that the altruistic inclination is always the best inclination. A person can act very altruistically and still be one hundred percent wrong and do a lot of damage. Denying oneself does not always lead to happiness for yourself or for the people you are trying to help. The Nazi stormtroopers thought they were being very altruistic when they gave up their lives for Hitler, when they selflessly

threw themselves into battle taking great casualties. They were, of course, not furthering good in the world. They were creating and helping the forces of evil. In Abraham's time when all the people around him were sacrificing their children to Molach and other pagan gods (After all, what could be a greater form of altruism than to sacrifice that which you love the most?), Abraham refused to do this, and G-d confirmed that He was right in the story of the Akedah. After Abraham had thought that G-d had commanded him to sacrifice his son, G-d emphatically forbade it. Child sacrifice is an abomination, a horror. Altruism is not always good, and self-gratification is not always immoral and wrong. People have a distorted sense of what religion is. They feel that if you deny yourself, you are being religious, and if you do not deny yourself, you are being selfish and sinful. This is not true.

The rabbis tell the story that after the destruction of the first Temple, the Jewish people complained to G-d. They said, "G-d, it is Your fault that the first Temple was destroyed. You gave us the Yetzer HoRah, the evil inclination. If You would not have given us the Yetzer HoRah, we would not have committed the acts which brought upon us the destruction of the Temple. We would not have stolen and robbed or killed. We would not have acted sexually immoral by participating in licentious idol worship, etc." G-d told the people, "O.K., you are right. I will removed from you the Yetzer HoRah." All of a sudden nobody got married, nobody was working, nobody had any ambition. The society started to fall apart. The people once again complained to G-d. Businesses were not operating. People could not get enough food and shelter. Children were not being born.

The future was not assured. Something had to be done. G-d again listened to them and returned to them most of the Yetzer HoRah, not enough, though, to cause them to again worship idols. The point of this Medrash is to teach us that ambition and desire for the material, sensual things in life (food, shelter, sex, etc.) <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ not bad. They are necessary for a human being. Without ambition and the desire to make a reputation, making a living, etc., nothing gets done. Even scholars would not learn because the acquisition of knowledge is, in itself, a form of self-gratification.

Altruism can be evil as well as being good; so can self-gratification. It can be good or bad depending upon how it is used. We Jews have never believed in self-denial for self-denial's sake. We have been an anti-ascetic religion. Self-denial can lead to terrible consequences if it is carried too far. It really then becomes the worship of a person's willpower. A person can learn to steel himself to all sorts of horrors. You can steel yourself by worshipping your willpower to deny compassion and humanity. That's what the Nazis did when they threw Jewish children directly into the fire to save a few cents of gas. They denied their own feelings for the sake of the Fuehrer. The rabbis tell us that anybody who denies himself anything which he can legally and halachically enjoy in this world has actually committed a sin for which he will be held accountable. The worship of the will, irrespective of its moral consequences, is a form of idolatry.

The rabbis tell us that until a person is Bar or Bas Mitzvah he or she has only the Yetzer HoRah, the urge to gratify himself or herself.

Children need a lot of care. They must be nurtured. A little baby cannot take care of himself, much less others. Until a person is Bar or Bas Mitzvah, he or she really concentrates on receiving from others, not on giving to others. It really is not possible for them, in most instances, to do significantly altruistic acts. Of course, there are exceptions, but the growing and maturation process takes up all of a young person's energy. After Bar or Bas Mitzvah, there is a great urge for teenagers and young adults to be altruistic. There is a great need for them to give, to sacrifice. That's what is known as the idealism of youth, and many experts say that the reason so many Jewish youngsters are being drawn into the cults is because they are not being given an opportunity to express their altruistic impulse.

Their altruistic impulse is being squelched by a materialistic society which does not recognize altruism as a valid expression of a person's personality. A person is supposed to just concentrate on himself, to get a very good professional education so he can earn a lot of money. There is in our community Yetzer Tov deprivation. Because of this, many young people rebel, join cults, become radicals, etc. A generation ago many of these young people would have gone to Israel to be Chalutzeem, pioneers, or become social activists here in America. For some reason this is not happening any more. Maybe their families are discouraging them. Others used to go on to yeshivas to dedicate their lives to serving their people by serving as rabbis, cantors, etc. This, many times, too, is now discouraged. This deprivation of the Yetzer Tov is a very serious matter which has caused a lot of problems to our generation. We have not let our young people

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express their Yetzer Tov. We have not explained to them the Jewish concept of altruism.

Recently someone came to me who said that if her husband would recover from an operation, she would never wear jewelry again. I looked at her, stunned. "What has that got to do with your husband's recovery? You must believe that G-d is a very cruel G-d. Do you believe that G-d only will help you or your husband if you punish yourself, if you deny yourself?" This is not a Jewish concept. We Jews do not believe that there is any merit in self-denial per se; however, I told this woman, "If you <sup>would have said</sup> ~~would say~~ that you would give your jewelry or its value to charity if your husband recovers, then you would have done a Jewish altruistic act. Just swearing never to wear jewelry again by leaving it in a safety deposit box does nothing. It is probably even a sin. However, saying that you will give its value to charity to help others is a great Mitzvah." Sacrifice must help people. It must better other people's lives otherwise sacrifice is of no use. Sacrifice then becomes the worship of the will and an agent of evil, as it was with the Nazi stormtroopers.

This point is emphasized in the Torah portion Tzav where we learn about the different sacrifices that were offered when the Temple stood. We learn that the highest form of sacrifice was the peace offering, not the burnt offering. The burnt offering was an offering in which all except the skin of the animal was offered. There was no offering in which the whole animal was consumed. Sacrifice should never consume us entirely. The burnt offering was usually a preparatory sacrifice or the community's sacrifice, and it was not considered

the highest form of sacrifice. The highest form of sacrifice was the peace offering in which very little was offered on the altar, but most of it was eaten by the person who brought the sacrifice, by the priest, and by the poor. The rabbis teach us that in Messianic times all the sacrifices will cease except for the peace offering, or the thanksgiving offering. It will always be continued because by sharing things with others, we <sup>give</sup> will joy not only to ourselves but also to others. That's why to this very day when a person wants to celebrate a happy occasion, he gives a kiddush, not just so that he can eat and be happy, but so that all the members of the community can share his joy or happiness with him and become happy themselves.

To take what you have and share it with others, to relieve the plight of the poor, to clothe the naked, to assure education for deserving youngsters, these are great Mitzvahs. To deny yourself things is no Mitzvah at all if the money you saved by denying yourself is not given to worthy causes. Sacrifice for sacrifice's sake alone is, in most instances, not only not a Mitzvah, it is a sin. It is important that we teach our youngsters this unique Jewish concept of sacrifice. Ambition is good, but it is not everything. We should stop depriving our youngsters of their opportunity to exercise their Yetzer Tov. We all need to sacrifice but to sacrifice in the right way. The denial of the need to sacrifice brings great aberrations as does the misuse of the desire to sacrifice. Unless our youngsters learn how to exercise their Yetzer Tov in the proper way, they will suffer personality aberrations and their Yetzer HoRah will be perverted, too, and their lives will become completely selfish, selfcentered,

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~~and ultimately not~~ <sup>unhappy and</sup> ~~fulfilling~~ <sup>un</sup> ~~and unhappy.~~ <sup>ed</sup> May our youngsters and each of us always live lives in which the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer HoRah can act in harmony so that, indeed, as G-d said when He created us, "Both the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer HoRah are Tov M'od, very good."

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This Shabbos is Shabbos Hagadol. On this Shabbos we read a special Haftorah from the Prophet Malachi whose theme is, "And He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers." We also read the Torah portion Tzav. This Torah portion tells us how Aaron and his children were commanded saying, "This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering will burn on the altar all night until the morning and the fire of the altar should always be kept burning. And the Kohen should dress in linen clothes and should lift up the ashes which the fire has consumed on the altar and should put it next to the altar." We then learn that the Kohen Godol was to change his clothes and take the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The question could be asked, is this a fitting job for the High Priest? The Torah only commanded two jobs for the High Priest. One was to officiate for the Jewish people on Yom Kippur. He was to conduct the service. He was to enter the Holy of Holies. This, of course, was a very fitting job for a High Priest, but why should the High Priest every morning have to come to the altar and remove the ashes and then remove them to another place outside the camp. The rabbis tell us that from the fire on the altar the menorah was lit. Still, it seems strange that this should be the job of the High Priest.

The rabbis explain that here the word for "ashes - deshen" which does not mean "cold ashes" but "embers". The Kohen Godol was to fan these embers to make them come alive again. In this Torah portion Aaron and his children are commanded that this should be their responsibility. We learn that Aaron's children assumed

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important and significant roles in the Jewish people after Aaron died, but Moshe's children do not seem to have held any kind of position at all. Why should this be? Why should it be that Aaron's children continued to serve the Jewish people in high places for generations while Moshe's children were more or less lost among the masses of the Jewish people. It is true that Moshe's children are mentioned sometimes in the chronicles but in a very minor position. Most of Moshe's children did not assume positions of leadership as did Aaron's. Why should it be that Aaron's children assumed positions of responsibility and Moshe's did not?

Perhaps we can understand this question if we realize that Moshe and Aaron were two different type of people. They were brothers but different. Moshe never spent a day in slavery. Moshe was raised in Pharaoh's court and even led Pharaoh's army and captured Abasini in Ethiopia for Pharaoh. Moshe, the rabbis, say was disgusted with the Jewish people because it was when he heard two Jews arguing and saying, "Are you going to kill us as you killed the Egyptian?" that he said, "Olchain Adov Hanoda - And now this thing is known", which means that, "Now I understand why the Jewish people are in slavery. They deserve it. They are always fighting among themselves." So when he escaped to Midian he did not say he was Jewish; he said he was an Egyptian. Moshe, after he married Zipporah, according to the rabbis, even agreed to raise his first child, Eliezer, as a gentile, let him attend gentile schools, let him attend gentile happenings. Anything we have to teach him we teach him at home. Moshe, only later, was able to have a positive influence over his children.

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Moshe also had a different type of personality than his brother. Aaron had a warm personality. Moshe was more cerebral. Moshe, of course, was a greater man. After all, G-d gave him the ten commandments and spoke to him most of the time. But Moshe did not have the empathy with the people that Aaron had. Moshe was a person who came to G-d after many struggles while Aaron had a kind of natural inborn faith. Aaron related easily to people while Moshe did not relate easily to people. In fact, the rabbis tell us that when Aaron died the people mourned for 30 days willingly and with great wailing, but when Moshe died the perfunctorily performed the 30 day mourning period. Moshe was a great man, a greater man than his brother, but he did not know how to relate to others as his brother did. That is why Aaron was given the job of the High Priest. It was he who could fan the embers of faith in the people's heart. He knew how to relate to people, to take the wild fire of the altar and convert it into the steady stream of the menorah. There is an argument which has been going on years about what is more important? Nature or nurture? When we raise children, what is more important? Heredity or environment? Actually, the latest scientific research has come down squarely on the side of nature. Nature has an awful lot to do with what a person is and how his personality develops. They have done experiments with identical twins and have found that twins separated at birth and raised by different families, separated by thousands of miles, cultures, speaking different languages and having different languages sometimes, have the same characteristics, by and large. Whether a person is an extrovert or introvert seems to be determined by nature and not nurture. When all things are said and done, about 70-80% of a person's personality is dependent upon his genes and

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only about 20% upon environment. Anyone who has had more than one child knows this, that your children from the day they are born have a separate and distinct personality which never changes. Of course, it does not mean that if a person is born with a very clever mind and is diligent in many activities and who has a good memory, nature cannot determine whether he will use these things for good or bad. That is where the home environment comes in. We have to take the flames of the fire and convert it into a steady light of the menorah. Aaron was able to relate to his children and they could bring their problems to him. His children knew that their father would take the embers, take the crushed experiences they had, and cause these embers to flame up again so they would have confidence to go on. They knew their father was interested not only in his problems but also in their problems. In the case of Moshe Rabbeinu, Moshe Rabbeinu was more interested his problems than those of his children. Aaron knew that in order to raise a future generation you had to relate with them, listen to them, be with them, be concerned about their problems and accomplishments, too. You had to take their disappointments and show the good aspects that could come from these disappointments. Aaron had a knack for doing that. He could turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the father. Therefore, his children continued to play a prominent role in the Jewish community because they understood the ups and downs of life because their father was always there backing them and helping them.

Today is Shabbos Hagodol and we might think we should start preparing our children now for the seder with ringing declarations of freedom, with ringing declaration of how we are

