

How to Sustain Your Passion

Levit., Chapter 6

1. And the L-rd spoke to Moses, saying,
2. Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: That is the burnt offering which burns on the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn with it.
3. And the kohen shall don his linen tunic, and he shall don his linen trousers on his flesh. And he shall lift out the ashes into which the fire has consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, and put them down next to the altar.
4. He shall then take off his garments and put on other garments, and he shall take out the ashes to a clean place outside the camp.
5. And the fire on the altar shall burn on it; it shall not go out. The kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning, and upon it, he shall arrange the burnt offering and cause the fats of the peace offerings to [go up in] smoke upon it.
6. A continuous fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not go out.



פרק א
 א. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה
 לֵאמֹר: ב. צַו אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת
 בְּנָיו לֵאמֹר זֹאת תֹּרַת הָעֹלָה
 הוּא הָעֹלָה עַל מִזְבֵּחַ עַל
 הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כָּל הַלַּיְלָה עַד הַבֹּקֶר וְאֵשׁ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תֹּקֵד בּוֹ: ג.
 וְלִבְשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מְדוּ בַד וּמְכַנְסֵי בַד וְלִבַּשׁ עַל בְּשָׂרוֹ וְהָרִים
 אֶת הַדָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת הָעֹלָה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשָׂמוּ
 אֶצְל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
 ד. וּפָשַׁט אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְלִבַּשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְהוֹצִיא אֶת
 הַדָּשָׁן אֶל מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה אֶל מְקוֹם טְהוֹר: ה. וְהָאֵשׁ עַל
 הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תֹּקֵד בּוֹ לֹא תִכָּבֵה וּבַעַר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בַּבֹּקֶר
 בַּבֹּקֶר וְעֵרֶךְ עָלֶיהָ הָעֹלָה וְהִקְטִיר עָלֶיהָ חֶלְבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים: ו.
 אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תֹּקֵד עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֵה:

And G-d spoke to Moses, saying: Command Aaron and his son... this is the law of the ascending offering...

Rashi

The expression tzav (“command”) implies an urging for now and for future generations.

Maimonides

The king Moshiach will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old, to its original sovereignty. He will build the Holy Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. In his times, all the laws of the Torah will be reinstated as before; the sacrifices will be offered, the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year instituted as outlined in the Torah.

and he shall lift out the ashes

Rashi

He would scoop out a full pan of ashes from the innermost mass of ashes from burnt out sacrificial parts on the altar and deposit them at the east side of the ramp that led up to the altar

Likkutei Sichot

Even though he changed his garments, it was the same priest who performed the lofty task of shoveling the ashes in the Master’s Presence who also performed the more menial task of dumping the ashes outside the camp. This teaches that we should be dedicated to serving G-d not only with lofty honorable tasks, but that we should also delight in simple, physical chores that are needed to prepare for the observance of a mitzvah.

And the fire upon the Altar shall be kept burning in it... and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning (6:5)

Talmud, Eruvin 63a

Although a fire descended from heaven upon the Altar, it is a mitzvah to add to it a humanly produced fire.

The Chassidic Masters

This is a rule that applies to all areas of life: the gifts of life are bestowed upon us from Above, yet it is

G-d's desire that we add to them the product of our own initiative.

And the fire upon the Altar shall be kept burning in it... and the priest shall burn wood on it (6:5)

Alshich

There is a fire of love for G-d that burns within every soul. It is the task of the "Kohen"--the spiritual leaders of the generation--to feed and preserve this fire.

A constant fire shall burn upon the Altar; it shall never go out (6:6)

Hayom Yom

The Altar represents man's heart. Thus the requirement to have fire burning continually on the Altar signifies that our hearts should be kept continually afire with palpable love of G-d.

Then we are promised "lo tichbe" לא תִכָּבֵה, literally this means, "it must not go out," but the Maggid of Mezeritch gave an alternative rendering, "your negative aspects" לא "will be extinguished" תִּכָּבֵה.

Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 4:6

"Constantly"--even on Shabbat; "constantly"--even under conditions of ritual impurity; "it shall never go out"--also not during the journeys [through the desert, when the Altar was covered with a cloth of purple wool]. What did they do with the fire during the journeys? They placed over it a copper bowl.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Shabbat is when we disengage ourselves from all things material; "ritual impurity" (tum'ah) represents an opposite state--one of excessive enmeshment in the mundane. Yet the Torah instructs that the fire upon the Altar must be kept burning "even on Shabbat" and "even under conditions of ritual impurity."

There are times when we believe ourselves to be "above it all" as the spirituality of the moment transports beyond the so-called trivialities of physical life. Conversely, there are times when we feel overwhelmed by those very "trivialities." Says the Torah: the fire on your internal Altar must--and can--be kept burning at all times. No moment in your life is too exalted or too debased to sustain your passion and enthusiasm in the fulfillment of the purpose to which you were created, which is to raise up to G-d the materials of your everyday existence.

Maayanah Shel Torah

"It shall never go out--also not during the journeys." Special care must be taken during the "journeys" of life--the times that a person ventures away from the home environment that fosters his character and integrity--so that the fire in his soul should not succumb to alien influences.

SUMMARY

- Every aspect of the physical sanctuary has its counterpart in the inward 'sanctuary' within the soul of the Jew. The heart is the altar.
- Sacrifice is insufficient without the constant fire of love. Discipline and commitment to self-growth, without love, is inert.
- When you love life, you're less likely to feel weighed down by your inadequacies. When you love your spouse, you're less likely to be enraged by his or her flaws. Positive words of affection can be a more effective catalyst for change than scrutinizing the problems. Turn up the fire, and the negatives dissolve.
- Every moment is an opportunity to sustain our passionate enthusiasm for bringing more goodness and G-dliness to our world. None are too exalted and none are too debased.

