**PARASHAT TZAV**

**By Rav David Silverberg**

Motzaei Shabbat

Parashat Tzav begins with the command of *terumat ha-deshen* – removing each morning ash which had collected on the altar overnight, while the sacrifices were being burned. The Torah emphasizes that the removal of ash must be done with the *kohein*’s priestly garments, commanding that he must wear “*mido vad u-mikhnesei vad*” – “his linen garment, and linen pants” (6:3). Rashi, based on the Gemara (Yoma 23b), comments that the word “*mido*” in this verse means that the garments worn by the *kohein* must be “*ke-midato*” – in his size. The priestly garments worn by a *kohein* must fit him properly, and not be too long or too short.

Netziv, in his *Ha’ameik Davar*, notes that the Torah mentions here only two of the priestly garments – the tunic (referred to here with the word “*mido*,” as Rashi explains), and the pants. *Kohanim* also wore two other special garments – a turban (*migaba’at*) and a belt (*avneit*), but they are not mentioned here in this verse. Netziv suggests that they were omitted because the rule of “*midato*,” that the *kohein* must wear garments his size, do not apply to the turban and belt. The reason, presumably, is because these were simply pieces of cloth that the *kohein* wrapped around his head and waist, respectively. As such, their length did not matter, as they could be wrapped just once or several times, depending on the size of the *kohein*’s head or waist. Therefore, in this context, where the Torah specifies the need for the *kohein* to wear garments his size, it mentions only the two garments to which this requirement applies.

It has been suggested that this distinction between the different priestly garments reflects the tension between uniformity and individuality. Some qualities and behaviors are of the “one-size-fits-all” variety, and should be embraced by all. Virtues such as sensitivity, kindness, patience, halakhic compliance, and hard work, for example, are universal. Like the *kohanim*’s turban and belt, they can and should be shared by all of us. There are, however, certain characteristics, habits and practices which, like the *kohein*’s tunic, must “fit to size.” Just as one *kohein* cannot borrow his fellow *kohein*’s tunic, because it does not precisely fit him, similarly, not everything one person does is necessarily right for somebody else. While there is a basic code of law and ethics which is common to us all, there is room for each individual to excel and achieve in the manner best suited for his or her particular skills and nature. Sometimes we are well advised to “borrow” our fellow’s “garment” – to look at his or her conduct and character as a model for us to strive to follow. But sometimes, our fellow’s behaviors or characteristics are not right for us, and should not serve an example for us to aspire to. We need to carefully distinguish between those qualities and practices which are “one-size-fits-all,” and are incumbent upon all of us, and those which depend on each individual’s unique personality and skills set.

Sunday

The Torah in the beginning of Parashat Tzav describes the two stages that were involved in the removal of the ashes that collected on the altar in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The first, the *terumat ha-deshen*, was performed each morning by a *kohein* who would remove the ash from the altar and place it alongside the altar. The second stage – *hotza’at ha-deshen* – was removing the ash outside the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The Torah writes that before the second stage, the *kohein* removes his garments, and wears “other garments.”

The Gemara in Masekhet Yoma (23b) cites two views as to the meaning of this phrase. According to one view – which Rashi follows in his Torah commentary – the *hotza’at ha-deshen*, like other rituals in the *Mikdash*, required the priestly garments, but the garments worn for this particular ritual were of a lower quality than the standard *bigdei kehuna* (priestly vestments). Rabbi Eliezer, however, reads this verse much differently, claiming that the word “*acheirim*” refers not to the *kohein*’s garments, but rather to the *kohein* himself. In his view, this verse should be understood to mean that even “other” *kohanim*, who are not normally permitted to perform the rituals in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, are permitted to conduct the *hotza’at ha-deshen*. Namely, *ba’alei mum* – *kohanim* with a physical defect that disqualifies them from functioning in the Temple – are nevertheless allowed to bring the ash outside the *Mikdash*. The Ramban, in his Torah commentary, understands Rabbi Eliezer as disputing the majority opinion that *bigdei kehuna* are required for *hotza’at ha-deshen*, and maintaining that the *kohein* who brings out the ashes must change into his ordinary clothes. The reason, quite simply, is because this job would likely result in soiling the *kohein*’s clothing, which would be disrespectful to the special priestly garments. The Torah therefore required, according to the Ramban, that the *kohein* who brings out the ashes must first change into his personal clothing, out of respect for the *bigdei kehuna*. The Ramban notes that this appears to be the straightforward reading of the verse. (*Tosafot Yeshanim* in Masekhet Yoma understood Rabbi Eliezer’s view differently, claiming that Rabbi Eliezer agrees with the majority view that *hotza’at ha-deshen* is performed with *bigdei kehuna*, and their argument surrounds only the question of whether this ritual may be performed by *ba’alei mum*.)

On the basis of Rabbi Eliezer’s position (as understood by the Ramban), the Klausenberger Rebbe suggested a novel explanation of the famous comment of *Torat Kohanim*, cited by Rashi (6:2), regarding the opening words of Parashat Tzav. God introduced this section by instructing Moshe, “Command Aharon and his sons,” and *Torat Kohanim* explains this as referring to a special element of “*zeiruz*” (urging, or exhorting) that was necessary in presenting this *mitzva*, because extra “*zeiruz*” is needed“where there is a financial loss.” Apparently, *Torat Kohanim* understood that the commands in this section entailed some sort of financial sacrifice on the part of the *kohanim*, and so God told Moshe to convey these commands to the *kohanim* with special emphasis. Many writers endeavored to explain where in this set of commands the *kohanim* are called upon to make a financial sacrifice. The Klausenberger Rebbe suggests that in light of Rabbi Eliezer’s view, the explanation might be that the *kohanim* would be reluctant to deal with the ashes of the altar in their own clothing, because of the risk of ruining them. The financial sacrifice involved in this process is the soiling of the *kohanim*’s personal garments over the course of bringing out the ashes. God therefore told Moshe to issue this command with special emphasis, to impress upon the *kohanim* the importance of this *mitzva* despite the potential risk of ruining their clothing.

Monday

Yesterday, we noted the Gemara’s discussion in Masekhet Yoma (23b) concerning the Torah’s instructions in Parashat Tzav for *hotza’at ha-deshen* – the removal of the ashes from the altar to a designated area outside the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The Torah instructs that before the *kohein* brings the ashes outside the area of the Temple, he should remove his garments and wear “other garments” (6:4). Although this might seem to indicate that the *kohein* changes out of his priestly garments and wears ordinary clothes (which is how the Ramban understood, as we saw yesterday), the majority opinion explains this verse differently. According to the majority opinion (and, as some *Rishonim* explain, even according to the minority view), the *kohein* wears *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments) for the *hotza’at ha-deshen*, but the clothing worn for this procedure is of a lower quality than the standard *bigdei kehuna*.

The Rambam, in *Hilkhot Temidin U-musafin* (2:10), follows this opinion, but surprisingly, he applies it also to the *terumat ha-deshen* – the daily removal of some ash from the altar. The Torah instructs the *kohein* to change his clothing before *hotza’at ha-deshen* – bringing the collected heap of ash outside the Temple – but according to the Rambam, this requirement applies also to the daily ritual of removing some ash from the altar and placing it alongside the altar. Such an opinion is cited by Rashi, in his commentary to Masekhet Yoma (12b), but Rashi dismisses this view, noting that the Gemara’s instruction that the *kohein* change his clothes is said only in regard to *hotza’at ha-deshen*. The commentators to the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* offer different theories to explain why the Rambam felt that this requirement applies also to the daily *terumat ha-deshen* requirement.

The Radbaz, in one of his responsa (8:205), brings a question posed to him raising several difficulties with the Rambam’s view, including a number of indications that the standard *bigdei kehuna* were worn for the *terumat ha-deshen*. First, the *kohein gadol* performed all the rituals in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* on Yom Kippur, and *Tosafot* in Masekhet Yoma (20b) show from the Gemara that this included the *terumat ha-deshen*. The *kohein gadol* was required to wear his eight special garments whenever he served in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, and nowhere is there any indication that he had a lower-quality set of garments for the *terumat ha-deshen* ritual on Yom Kippur. Secondly, later in *Hilkhot Temidin U-musafin* (4:1-2), the Rambam describes the procedure of how *kohanim* were selected for the various tasks in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* each day, and he writes that all the *kohanim* of the day’s shift would assemble in their priestly garments, and lots were cast. Later (4:5), after explaining how the lots were cast, the Rambam writes that the *kohein* selected for the *terumat ha-deshen* also arranged the firewood on the altar, and brought fire from the altar inside to the incense altar. The clear implication is that the *kohein* remained in the same, standard *bigdei kehuna* even after being selected for the *terumat ha-deshen*, and that he proceeded immediately from the *terumat ha-deshen* to arranging the wood and bringing fire to the incense altar. The Rambam gives no indication that the *kohein* would change his clothing after performing the *terumat ha-deshen*.

The Radbaz suggests that possibly, the Rambam followed the view taken by Rashi in his Torah commentary here in Parashat Tzav (6:4) that the *kohein* is not strictly required to change into lower-quality garments for *hotza’at ha-deshen*. This is appropriate, so as not to soil the *bigdei kehuna*, but is not, in Rashi’s view, an outright halakhic requirement. (The Ramban, in his comments to this verse, disagrees.) The Radbaz speculates that the Rambam perhaps subscribed to this view, and for this reason he did not include in his presentation of the laws any mention of the *kohein* changing his clothes before and after the *terumat ha-deshen*, as this is not strictly required.

Tuesday

Yesterday, we noted the debate between Rashi and the Ramban regarding the Torah’s requirement that the *kohein* change into lower-quality garments before bringing the ash that had collected on the altar outside the *Beit Ha-mikdash* (Vayikra 6:4). The Gemara (Yoma 23b) explains this requirement by way of an analogy to a king’s servant, who, after working in the kitchen preparing the king’s feast, will change his clothing before serving the king. It would be disrespectful to appear before the king with the clothing worn while preparing the food, which, presumably, was dirtied in the process. Likewise, the Gemara explains, it is inappropriate for a *kohein* to wear the same clothing worn while bringing out the ashes – which is likely soiled – while performing the other rituals in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. For this reason, the Torah requires the *kohein* to change into lower-quality garments before bringing out the ashes. Surprisingly, however, Rashi writes that changing garments actually does not constitute a strict obligation. The Torah mentions the *kohein*’s changing his clothing merely as a matter of “*derekh eretz*” – proper etiquette – but not as a bona fide halakhic requirement. The Ramban questions Rashi’s view, noting that there is no indication in the verse that changing into lower-quality clothing is optional.

[Maharam Shick (*Taryag Mitzvot*, 132)](https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=37469&st=&pgnum=103) suggests a possible explanation for Rashi’s view. He writes that Rashi would likely concede that the *kohein* is strictly required to ensure that the garments he wears while performing the service in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* are clean. As such, he is strictly required not to allow his regular garments to become soiled. However, fundamentally, the *kohein* has the option of simply exercising care while removing the ashes to ensure that his regular priestly garments do not become dirtied. Rashi did not consider it a strict obligation for the *kohein* to change his clothing because he could, technically speaking, wear the clothing he wears while performing the other rituals, but with extra care. Nevertheless, Maharam Shick explains, it is preferred that the *kohein* wear lower-quality garments for *hotza’at ha-deshen* (removing the ashes) because of the concern of *mar’it ha-ayin* – that people will suspect him of carelessness. Since generally, dealing with ashes has the effect of soiling one’s clothing, people who see the *kohein* bringing the ashes from the Temple courtyard outside the *Beit Ha-mikdash* in his regular *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments) might assume that the *kohein* is disrespecting his special garments. They will not likely imagine that he is exercising special care to keep his clothing clean, and will instead conclude that he simply does not show enough respect to the sacred garments. And it is only for this reason, Maharam Shick suggests, that the *kohein* is encouraged to wear different garments while performing the *hotza’at ha-deshen*. Hence, Rashi wrote that changing garments is not obligatory, as it is not strictly required as far as the procedure of the *hotza’at ha-deshen* is concerned. It is required merely as a matter of “*derekh eretz*” –to avoid suspicion, as people might otherwise wrongly assume that he is treating his sacred vestment disrespectfully.

Wednesday

The Torah in Parashat Tzav (7:15-16) establishes a distinction between the *toda* (thanksgiving) offering and other *shelamim* sacrifices – the category of sacrifices which are eaten not only by the *kohanim*, but also by the individual who brought the animal. *Shelamim* sacrifices have a lower status of sanctity than other sacrifices, expressed by the fact that the meat is not reserved for the *kohanim*, and that the meat may be eaten throughout the city of Jerusalem, and not only in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. Most *shelamim* sacrifices also feature an additional measure of leniency – that they may eaten through the end of the day after the sacrifice is offered. Higher level sacrifices may be eaten only through the night that follows the day they are offered, whereas standard *shelamim* sacrifices may be eaten also the following day. The exception to this rule is the *toda*, which, although it may be eaten by non-*kohanim* and throughout Jerusalem, may be eaten only through the night after it is offered.

One common explanation for this exception is that the Torah wanted to encourage the one bringing the thanksgiving sacrifice to invite a large group of guests to share in his festive celebration. As this sacrifice is offered to express gratitude to God for being rescued from danger – as Rashi (7:12) explains – it is to be eaten together with a large crowd, in order to publicize the experience and thereby bring glory to the Almighty. The *toda* was a very large offering, consisting of an animal as well as forty loaves of bread, and thus by requiring that it be consumed by the end of the night, the Torah all but ensures that the individual will invite a large number of participants. This results in a festive gathering where God’s kindness is publicized.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, however, suggests a different explanation. He writes that the shorter time-frame allotted for the consumption of the *toda* expresses a link between the physical act of eating, and the slaughtering of the animal in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. This link is established in the case of a *toda* because being rescued from danger, a person is to reflect upon the fact that God intervened to sustain him, for a purpose, in order for him to live his life in God’s service. In Rav Hirsch’s words:

Here [in the case of a *toda* sacrifice], above all, the necessity is present to have the *akhila* [eating] – the whole future enjoyment of the restored well-being which God has granted us – in the clearest and most definite manner, only on the grounds of the *zevicha* [slaughtering]. That we have been saved from a danger makes us vow, with even deeper fervor than ordinarily, that we will use and enjoy the pleasures of life only on the basis of giving everything in our lives completely up to the Will of God.

Having been delivered safely from a situation of peril, we are to commit ourselves with greater conviction to live in accordance with the divine will. Such an experience reminds us of the basic truth of which we should always be cognizant, but too often forget – that if we are here in this world, then this means that God wants us here in order to serve Him with devotion. And therefore, after this kind of experience, upon recognizing God’s hand in sustaining him, one brings a special sacrifice which must be eaten in conjunction with its slaughtering in the Temple – symbolizing the devotion of the totality of his life to the Almighty.

Thursday

Parashat Tzav tells of the formal consecration of Aharon and his sons as *kohanim*, in fulfillment of the detailed commands given earlier, in Sefer Shemot. God commanded Moshe to assemble the entire nation at the entrance to the *Mishkan*, where they witnessed the offering of the special sacrifices through which Aharon and his sons were formally designated as ministers in the *Mishkan*.

Rashi (8:3), citing the Midrash, comments, “This is one of the places where the small contained the many.” The area near the entrance to the *Mishkan* was not actually large enough to contain the entire nation, and yet, miraculously, they all managed to crowd into this area in order to witness the consecration of the *kohanim*.

What might be the significance of this miraculous phenomenon observed by the Midrash?

One possibility (suggested by Rav Menachem Bentzion Sacks, in his *Menachem Tziyon*) is that the Midrash here speaks of the extraordinary ability we have to find room for one another when we so desire, when we are genuinely committed to each other. If people live together peacefully, without jealousy and competition, then they can live comfortably even with limited space and limited resources. When they want to make it work, they will generously share and look out for one another, such that they can be accommodated even by a “small space,” whether literally or figuratively. Times of scarcity can be successfully managed if we look out for one another, and not only for ourselves. This is symbolized by the consecration of the *kohanim*, when the entire nation assembled together in a small space, unified in their devotion to God and their enthusiastic anticipation of His taking residence among them in the *Mishkan*.

Rav Yisrael of Modzhitz, in *Divrei Yisrael*, offers a different insight into the Midrash’s comment. He sees the *petach Ohel Mo’eid* – the entrance to the *Mishkan* – as a symbol of the “entrance” to *teshuva*. The Midrash elsewhere (*Shir Hashirim Rabba* 5:2) famously teaches that God says to *Am Yisrael*, “Open for Me an entrance of a pinhole, and I will open for you an entrance like the entrance to the Sanctuary.” The Rebbe of Modzhitz suggests that *Chazal* saw the entrance to the *Mishkan* as a symbol of the entrance which opens for us when we make a tiny “opening,” when we take the initial modest steps towards self-improvement. And thus specifically in reference to the *petach Ohel Mo’eid*, the Midrash observes that there are occasions when “*hechezik mi’ut et ha-merubeh*” – “the small contains the many.” The small steps we take towards repentance and self-growth can lead us to “many,” to great progress and advancement. We should never belittle the “pinholes,” the modest improvements that we make in our lives, because they are far more significant than we tend to think. Just as the relatively small area of the *petach Ohel Mo’eid* was able to contain the entire nation, our relatively small steps forward contain far more importance than we would imagine they could. According to the Rebbe of Modzhitz, then, the Midrash here urges us to never dismiss our small steps, to appreciate the value of even the seemingly trivial improvements that we make in our conduct and in our lives, and recognize that each one is precious and should bring us satisfaction.

Friday

One of the sacrifices described in Parashat Tzav is the *mincha*, which consisted of flour (6:7-16). When a standard *mincha* offering is brought, the ministering *kohein* takes a handful of the offering and place it on the altar, while the rest of the offering is distributed among the *kohanim* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* for consumption. The exception is the *mincha* offered by a *kohein*, which is offered entirely on the altar. This includes also the *minchat chavitin* – the special *mincha* offering which the *kohein gadol* is required to offer each morning and afternoon. It, too, is burnt entirely on the altar.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (*Likutei Sichot*, Parashat Tzav, 5747) notes a subtle distinction between the Torah’s formulation in presenting this *halakha* in regard to the *minchat chavitin*, and in regard to *mincha* offerings brought by *kohanim* generally. In reference to the *kohein gadol*’s daily *minchat chavitin*, the Torah instructs, “*…kalil toktar*” – “it shall be offered [on the altar] completely” (6:15). In the next verse, the Torah says about a standard *kohein*’s *mincha* offering, “*kalil tiheyeh*” – “it shall be complete.”

The Rebbe suggests that this discrepancy underlies Rashi’s comments in explaining these two verses. Commenting on the phrase “*kalil toktar*” in reference to the *kohein gadol*’s offering, Rashi writes, “A handful is not taken for the remainder to be consumed; rather, all of it is entirely [placed on the altar].” Rav David Pardo, in his *Maskil Le-David*, explains Rashi’s comments to mean that *kemitza* – the removal of a handful from the offering – is, in fact, performed with the *minchat chavitin*, just like regular *mincha* offerings, but even the remainder is placed on the altar. Meaning, as opposed to regular *mincha* offerings, when a handful is removed and placed on the altar, and the rest is eaten by the *kohanim*, in the case of the *minchat chavitin*, a handful is removed and placed on the altar, and then the remainder is placed on the altar. This, Rav Pardo writes, is Rashi’s intent when he writes, “A handful is not taken *for the remainder to be consumed*.” A handful is, in fact, removed, but not for the purpose of separating between a portion to be placed on the altar and a portion to be consumed by the *kohanim*, but rather for both portions to be offered on the altar, in two separate stages. (Rav Pardo notes that Rav Yaakov Selnik, in his *Nachalat Yaakov*, explains Rashi’s comments differently.) According to Rashi, this is the meaning of the phrase “*kalil toktar*” – the *mincha* is offered on the altar in its entirety, but it is not whole throughout the process, as a handful is taken and offered separately.

When it comes to the *mincha* offering brought by an ordinary *kohein*, however, Rashi writes, “*Kulah shaveh la-gavo’ah*” – “It is all equally [offered] to the heavens.” In this context, Rashi emphasizes that all the grain in the offering is “equal,” with no separation at all. The Rebbe understands this to mean that *kemitza* was not done at all when an ordinary *kohein* offers a *mincha*, and the entire offering is placed on the altar all at once. This is why the Torah says about a regular *kohein*’s offering, “*kalil tiheyeh*” – “it shall be complete,” referring to the fact that no portion is separated at any stage in the process.

To explain the reason for this distinction, the Rebbe posits that fundamentally, the *mincha* offered by a *kohein* does not require *kemitza*, and is simply placed on the altar in its entirety. However, the *minchat chavitin* offered by the *kohein gadol*, according to Rashi, has an element of a *korban tzibur* – a public offering. The *kohein gadol* brings this offering not as an individual, but as a representative of all *Am Yisrael*. Indeed, the *Sefer Ha-chinukh* (136) writes that the daily *minchat chavitin* parallels the daily *tamid* sacrifice, which – like the *minchat chavitin* – is offered each morning and each afternoon. This offering thus had properties of both a *kohein*’s private offering – because it was, after all, offered by the *kohein gadol*, with his own money (Menachot 50b) – and a public sacrifice, as it was offered by the *kohein gadol* as the nation’s representative. For this reason, it was, on the one hand, offered entirely on the altar, like a *kohein*’s personal *mincha* sacrifice, but it required *kemitza*, like the public *minchat ha-omer* offering (see Rambam, *Hilkhot Temidin U-musafin* 7:12). And so while the *mincha* offered by a regular *kohein* is simply placed in its entirety on the altar, the *minchat chavitin*, a complex offering which was both a *minchat kohein* and a public offering, requires *kemitza*, like a standard *mincha*, but even the remainder is then placed on the altar, like a *minchat kohein*.

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