

DON'T SIT ON YOUR HANDS!

PARSHAS TZAV

There was a great talmid chacham, a man very learned in Torah, who woke up one morning unable to see. He rushed to the doctor who asked him when he had stopped seeing. The talmid chacham replied that it just happened, that morning. The doctor was shocked! He said that the eyes were in such bad condition that he should have stopped seeing years ago! The talmid chacham knew the answer as to why he had merited a medical miracle. He had spent his entire life learning Torah and writing sefarim, books on Torah knowledge. A few months before, he had begun to feel very tired. He decided that he was getting too old to continue writing and was going to stop as soon as he finished writing his current sefer. He had brought the completed sefer to the printer the day before he became blind! Hashem had granted the talmid chacham the gift of eyesight, as long as he continued to write sefarim.

Rashi says that the kohen had two distinct jobs removing ashes from the *mizbayach*, from the altar. One of the jobs was to remove **a handful** of the ashes that resulted from the offerings that were burnt on the **mizbayach**. The ashes were placed on the side of the *mizbayach*. "... He shall separate the ashes when the fire consumes the burnt offering on the altar... (Vayikra 6:3). The other job was to remove **all** the ashes once the *mizbayach* was full of ashes. Those ashes were put in a pure place outside the Temple Mount. "He shall [then] remove his garments and dress in other garments. He shall take out the ashes beyond the encampment..." (Vayikra 6:3).

Rabbi Yissochar Frand wrote a beautiful dvar Torah in the name of **Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch** zt"l. It makes sense that the kohen

"The kohen shall dress in his linen garment ... and he shall separate the ashes when the fire consumes the burnt offering on the altar and place it next to the altar. He shall [then] remove his garments and dress in other garments. He shall take out the ashes beyond the encampment, to a pure [undefined] place." (Vayikra 6:3-4)

removed all the ashes from the *mizbayach* once it became full of ashes. That was necessary to bring the next korban, the next offering. However, why was it necessary to remove just a handful of ashes from the previous day's offerings? **Rabbi Hirsch** zt"l explains that this teaches us a very

important lesson for life. It acts as a reminder to the kohen, and to us, that what he accomplished the previous day is gone. "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 devotion as if it were the first day of his life's work!" A person may have accomplished great things. He

shouldn't feel that he does not need to accomplish more. Every day is a new day, and much more can still be accomplished. If a person rests on his laurels, feeling he does not need to do more, he will not succeed in his worldly endeavors. Certainly, he will not succeed in his spiritual endeavors.

Thomas Edison invented the phonograph. The phonograph recorded the spoken voice and played it back. He invented an electric copy machine. He perfected the lightbulb, making it usable. He innovated great inventions which changed the world. He could have told himself that he had already made a mark in the world and that he could now take an early retirement. Had he done so, the 1,090 other patented inventions of his would not have been invented (at least, as of that time)! To Thomas Edison,

each day was a new day to accomplish more and more!

In spiritual endeavors, as well, we may have accomplished much. However, there is still so much more that we can achieve. We can raise ourselves to even greater spiritual heights. Unfortunately, if we become complacent based on yesterday's spiritual accomplishments, our spiritual level will sink. As we know, our spiritual level does not remain at status quo. We are either climbing or falling. We are either growing closer to Hashem or moving further apart.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l (Chofetz Chaim A Daily Companion by Michael Rothschild) says that our soul has a natural tendency to strive higher and higher spiritually. If we are actively involved in learning Torah and performing mitzvos, then our soul is growing spiritually, and we feel inner peace. If we are lazy and don't strive higher, then we will feel inner discontent.

We should always strive for spiritual growth.

(Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 2 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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