

# Tzav: Rav Kook Zt"l On The Weekly Parshah

- Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook.

The three parts of Kedushat Olah: On the altar, next to the altar, and - with a clothing change - outside the mahaneh. The significance of each, according to the vision of Rav Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook zt"l.

## TZAV: RAV KOOK ZT"l ON THE WEEKLY PARASHA

[Based on Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

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Tzav: The Olah Offering and Prophecy

1. The Torah portion begins by describing the process of burning the daily offering. The daily offering was an 'Olah', completely consumed by fire on the altar during the night. What was done with the ashes? A priest placed one shovelful of ashes next to the altar. To dispose of the rest, he changed into less important clothes, and brought the ashes to a ritually clean place outside the camp. The Torah concludes by instructing that the fire on the altar burn continuously. "The priest will kindle wood on it each morning." [Lev 6:2-5]
2. Upon analysis, we see that the daily Olah service involved three different locations, in descending holiness:
  - a. On top of the altar.
  - b. Next to the altar.
  - c. A ritually clean place outside the camp.
3. For Rav Kook, the completely burnt offering is a metaphor for the very highest level of contact between man and G-d. The fire on the altar reflects sublime experiences of inspiration and prophecy. At this level, the material world is of no consequence. The fire totally consumes the flesh of the offering, freeing man from the shackles of his physical reality. The kindling of the holy flames on man's soul is outside the framework of normal life. Such Divine interaction is beyond the ordinary structures of human existence, both individual and collective. The Olah offering burns on the altar itself.
4. However, we desire that the holy influence of this prophetic experience remain with us, making its mark on our personality and physical spirit. Therefore some ashes, left over from the altar's flames, are placed next to the altar. This is the secondary level of holiness - "next to the altar" - within those aspects of life which are close to the holy itself. There the sacred vision can be guarded and kept, undisturbed.
5. The lowest manifestation of the prophetic vision is its public revelation. Informing the people of the content of G-d's message, and thereby uplifting life, justice and morality with Divine light - this takes place at the third level. Outside the inner camp, bordering on the domain of secular life, the priest publicly takes out the remaining ashes. Even this area, however, is a "ritually clean place". The penetrating influence of the holy service makes its mark there. But the priest/prophet

needs to descend somewhat from his former spiritual state, and change into clothes of lesser worth, before performing this activity. "The clothes worn by the servant while cooking for his master should not be used when serving his master wine." [Yoma 23]

6. The Torah concludes its description of the Olah service by stating that the fire on the altar never extinguishes. Why mention this now? We need to be aware of the constant fire on the altar precisely at this juncture, after the priest/prophet has left the nucleus of holiness, to deal with the temporal aspects of life. Despite involvement with inconsequential, down-to-earth issues, the holy fire continues to kindle in the heart. This is the unique nature of the altar fire, which from afar warms and uplifts every soul of G-d's people. "The fire will kindle on the altar, never extinguishing." For "Powerful waters cannot quench the love; neither can the floods drown it." [Song of Songs 8:7]

7. But it is not enough for the holy fire to burn only in the inner depths of the heart. How can we ensure that its flames reach all aspects of life, and survive the flooding waters of materialism? "The priest will kindle wood on it each morning." What is this daily arrangement of kindling wood? "He awakens my ear to hear teachings each morning." [Is. 50:4] Renewal of the altar's hearth each day rejuvenates each Jewish soul, to contemplate the wonders of G-d and to take pleasure in the beauty of His Torah, renewed each day. New logs of wood nourish the altar's holy flames. They energize all souls, give strength for new positive actions, and awaken a new spirit of life from the holy fire within the inner soul.  
[Olat Riyyah I:122-124]

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[Submitted by Nisson Shulman]