

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas

Parshas Tzav

Siman #148	
This is the teaching of the burnt offering: it is the burnt offering that stays on its flame on the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn in it (Vayikra 6:2).	זאת תורת העלה היא העלה על מוקדה על המזבח כל (הלילה עד הבקר ואש המזבח תוקד בו (ג, ג
This matter I did not hear in the name of anyone, but someone explained it to me in the name of Rabbi Shmuel [of Warshavik] ז"ל:	דבר זה לא שמעתי בשם מי, ופרש לי אחד שהוא בשם רבי שמעון אל [וארשיוויק] ז"ל
Behold, the sign a person has to recognize whether he is truly serving Hashem and whether his service on that day was pleasing to Hashem—even if he sat the entire day over his sefer (holy book)—he can know it by the following:	הנה הסימן שיש לאדם להבחין אם עובד השם יתברך באמת ואם היתה עבודתו רצויה ביום הנה לה' יתברך, גם אם ישב כל היום על הספר יכול לדעת בזה
For from the Torah and service that a person does, a garment is made for his soul. And through this garment, the soul rises each night upward and draws near as a sacrifice on the altar through Michael the High Priest.	כי הנה מתורה ועבודה שאדם עושה נעשה לבוש לנשמתו, ועל ידי זה הלבוש היא עולה בכל לילה למעלה ומתקשרת לקרבן על המזבח על ידי מיכאל כהן גדול.
But if his Torah is without fear and love (of Hashem), it does not ascend upward (see Zohar Sulam, Vayikra 16:3), and the soul has no garment and no elevation.	אבל אם תורתו בלא דחילו ורחימו לא פרחא לעילא (עין זהר סולם ויקרא ט"ז, ג) ואין לנפש לבוש ואין לה עליה.
And the sign for this—whether the soul had an elevation—is: if he awakens in the morning with fiery enthusiasm for Hashem, this is a sign that his soul had been a sacrifice on the heavenly altar.	והסימן לזה אם היתה לנפש עליה—אם נתעורר בבקר בהתלהבות לה'—אז סימן שהיתה נשמתו קרבן על גבי המזבח.
And from that fire of the altar, his heart burns with love for Hashem.	ומאותו אש של מזבח לבו מתלהב לה.
And this is (the meaning of the verse): “This is the teaching of the burnt offering”—meaning: to know if his Torah had an elevation, if it rose upward—	וזהו "זאת תורת העלה", פירוש: לדעת אם היתה לתורתו עליה, אם פרחא לעילא
“it is the burnt offering”—know if his soul rose on its flame on the altar above all night until morning, had been a sacrifice on the altar. Then surely his Torah ascended and made a garment for the soul.	היא העלה"—דע אם נשמתו עלתה על מוקדה על המזבח של מעלה כל הלילה עד הבקר, היתה קרבן על גבי המזבח, אז ודאי תורתו עלתה והלבישה לנפש.
And how can one know this? That's why it says, “And the fire of the altar shall burn in him”—specifically: if upon awakening there burns within him a fire of enthusiasm for Hashem, then it is a sign that this is from the fire of the altar where his soul was a sacrifice.	ובמה ידע זאת? לזה אמר: "ואש המזבח תוקד בו"—דוקא. אם בהתעוררותו יוקד בו אש בהתלהבות לה'—אז סימן שנה נשאר מאש המזבח שהיתה נשמתו קרבן.

[NOTE: 🔥 The Fire That Burns Within Expounding on the Teaching:

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The verse in **Vayikra 6:2** — "זאת תורת העולה..." — is explained here not just as a law about the burnt offering, but as a **spiritual diagnostic**: How can I know if my Torah learning and service were real? Was I truly connected to Hashem today?

The answer lies in **what happens the next morning**.

Even if I spent the entire day in Torah study, even if externally it seemed like a day of holiness, there's one inner sign that reveals the truth: **When I wake up, do I feel a fire for Hashem?**

If I feel uplifted, inspired, eager to daven and to connect — it means my soul rose during the night, like a korban on the Heavenly Mizbeach, through the spiritual garment created by my Torah and mitzvos. And that fire I feel? It's the remnant of the Heavenly altar's fire that burned my soul as a korban to Hashem.

But if I wake up cold, empty, uninterested? Then maybe I was missing **Ahavah and Yirah** — love and awe — during the learning, and my Torah didn't create that "garment," that elevation.

This gives us a powerful **daily check-in**: not based on how long we studied or how many pages we covered, but **how much heart** we brought into it, and whether it lit a fire that carries over into the next day.

A Story: The Boy and the Fire in the Snow

In a small Polish town, long ago, lived a young boy named Meir. His family was poor, and his father — a woodchopper — barely made enough to feed them. Still, Meir loved to learn Torah. Every evening, after chores and helping his mother, he would run to the cold little shul and learn by candlelight, often falling asleep over his Gemara.

One night, the snow piled high and the freezing wind howled. The shamash of the shul came in early the next morning and stopped in shock. There, near the stove, lay Meir — asleep over his open Gemara, his face glowing, a look of deep peace on his face. The fire in the stove had long gone out. The room should've been icy.

But it wasn't.

It was warm. Radiantly warm.

Word spread, and the Rebbe of the town came to see. He closed his eyes and said quietly:

"This boy's soul rose last night. His Torah burned with such love and awe that he became a korban before Hashem. And the warmth you feel in this room? That's the fire of the Heavenly Mizbeach, still burning in him."

Meir later became a great Rav. But he would always say:

"More than learning Torah by fire, we must learn Torah *with fire* — the fire of the soul."

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Takeaway

Before we measure our spiritual day by external results, we should ask:

"Did my Torah and mitzvos light a fire within me?"

And in the morning, the answer reveals itself:

Is there a warmth, a yearning, a holy restlessness to come close to Hashem?

If yes — you were a korban. And your Torah flew upward like smoke on the altar. **END NOTE]**

Siman #159	
"When a leader sins" (Vayikra 4:22).	(אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא יִחָטָא (וַיִּקְרָא ד, כ"ב
Fortunate is the generation whose leader brings a korban for his unintentional sin (Horayos 10b).	אֲשֶׁרִי הַדּוֹר שֶׁהַנָּשִׂיא מְבִיא כִּפָּרָה עַל שְׁגָגָתוֹ (חוריות י, ב).
For it is taught in the Gemara (Horayos 10b): "They are forgiven their sins... and one who rises to greatness."	כִּי אֵיתָא בַּגְמָרָא (חוריות י, ב): 'מוֹחֲלִין לָהֶם 'עוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם... וְהָעוֹלָה לְגִדּוּלָה
And it is brought in Ba'al HaTurim (Bamidbar 6:3): A person does not become a leader from below unless he has become a wicked person from above.	וְאֵיתָא בְּבַעַל הַתּוֹרִים (בַּמִּדְבָּר ו, ג): 'אִין אָדָם נִעְשֶׂה 'רֹאשׁ מִלְמַטָּה רַק אִם נִעְשֶׂה רָשָׁע מִלְמַעְלָה
And this is (the meaning of the verse) "Appoint the Levi'im"—"appoint over him a wicked one" (Sanhedrin 14a), see there.	וְזֶהוּ: 'הַפְקֵד אֶת הַלְוִיִּם'—'הַפְקֵד עָלָיו רָשָׁע' (פְּסֻקֵּי הַדִּין 'י"ד), עִין שָׁם
It turns out that when a person rises to greatness, and he understands with his intellect that certainly he is a wicked person from above, and he contemplates teshuvah—then they forgive him.	נִמְצָא, כְּשֶׁעוֹלָה אָדָם לְגִדּוּלָה וּמִבִּין בְּשִׂכְלוֹ שֶׁבּוֹדָא הוּא רָשָׁע מִלְמַעְלָה, וּמִהֲרָהּ בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה—מוֹחֲלִין לוֹ

[NOTE:  Explanation & Expansion: "When a Leader Sins"

The Torah says:

"אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא יִחָטָא" — When a leader sins (Vayikra 4:22)

But the Sages in **Horayos 10b** read this verse with a twist:

"Ashrei haDor" — *Fortunate is the generation* whose leader admits his mistake and brings a korban (sacrifice) for even an **unintentional** sin.

Why is such a generation fortunate?

Because it means their leader has **humility**, **self-awareness**, and a **living connection to teshuvah**. He doesn't pretend perfection. He leads by example—not by being sinless, but by showing how to return when one *does* fall.

 **The Hidden Layers of Leadership**

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Now comes the surprising part from the **Ba'al HaTurim** and Chazal:

"No one becomes a leader from below unless he has become a *rasha* (wicked) from above."

Wait—what?

What this means, according to deeper sources, is that any time someone is placed in a **position of authority**, it's because in **Heaven**, his soul is being judged more harshly. **Leadership is not a reward—it's a test.**

And when someone **risers to greatness**, and he **realizes** that perhaps this is a sign of an inner flaw—a *din* on his soul above—and he **responds with teshuvah**, the Heavenly Court **forgives him**.

In other words: **Greatness can break a person—or awaken him.**

The real tzaddik is the one who says:

"If I'm being elevated, it must be that I'm being tested. I must examine myself, do teshuvah, and take responsibility."

A Story: The Rebbe Who Refused the Throne

In a city in Eastern Europe, after the passing of the community's revered Rav, the people turned to a quiet, brilliant scholar named **Reb Mendel** and begged him to become the new Rebbe.

He refused.

They pleaded.

He shook his head.

Finally, he sighed and whispered:

"Do you not understand? Leadership is not a promotion—it is a *Heavenly accusation*. If I am being offered this honor, it means they are judging me above. It means there is something to fix in me."

Still, after much pressure, he agreed—but only on one condition: that every day, he would be allowed one full hour alone, uninterrupted, to daven and cry before Hashem.

When asked what he did during that hour, he said:

"I beg Hashem that I should never become a 'leader' in my own eyes. That I should remember the burden is not mine to carry, and that if Heaven chose me, it's not because I'm great—it's because I need to do teshuvah."

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Years later, when people asked what made Reb Mendel so great, his students would say:

“It was the fire that burned inside him from knowing that leadership isn't a crown—it's a mirror. And he never stopped looking in it.”

Practical Takeaway (PT)

- **Are you in a position of influence?** As a parent, teacher, friend, or leader?
- **Instead of pride, do you feel awe and humility?** That's a sign you're doing it right.
- **When you rise—check your soul.** Don't assume elevation means approval. It might mean Hashem wants you to grow even more deeply.

And if you look inward, and return with a whole heart, then:

"מרחלין לו" – They forgive him.