

## This is the law of the elevation-offering... (that stays) on the flame, on the Altar, all night. (6:2)'

There are individuals who serve Hashem, observe Torah and *mitzvos*, yet their actions are not *oleh l'ratzon*, received by Hashem in good will. Something is missing in their service to the Almighty. That something is "heart," passion, enthusiasm. Such a person, even when he finally decides to go the route and serve Hashem with heartfelt passion, does so periodically. It is not one long constant *avodas haBorei*, service to the Creator. Dispassionate service goes nowhere; it certainly does not rise up to Hashem.

The story is told that the **Baal Shem Tov, zl**, was once asked to speak to a group of worshippers in a certain *shul*. He arrived at the *shul*, walked in, and stopped, saying, "It is difficult for me to sit down in this *shul*, because of the excess prayers that are accumulated here." The worshippers thought that the holy *Baal Shem* was praising the manner in which they prayed. The *Baal Shem* quickly shook them out of their reverie, "If you would *daven l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, then your prayers would rise up to Heaven. Sadly, your prayers are self-serving, praying with fervor only when your situation puts you up against a wall. Thus, the prayers have nowhere to go but down or to remain floating around within the four walls and ceiling of the *shul*. The building is replete with empty prayers. I have nowhere to sit down."

The **Ben Ish Chai** interprets this idea into the *pasuk*, *Hee ha'olah al mokdah*, "A person should serve Hashem *b'chol nafsho*, with his entire being, with a fiery passion *Al ha'Mizbayach*, on the Altar." This alludes to the heart. The total measurements of the *Mizbayach* equaled thirty-two *amos*, which happens to be the *gematria*, numerical equivalent, of *lev*, heart. The heart is the seat of passion. It is specifically from the heart that one's passion should be focused upward to serve Hashem. *Kol ha'laylah*, "The entire night." Serving Hashem is not a part-time endeavor. It must continue ceaselessly day and night. There are no vacations when one serves Hashem.

Fiery passion serves another purpose: it becomes the extreme which has purging power to cleanse and purify a fiery passion which is focused away from Hashem. The **Sidduro Shel Shabbos** cites the *pasuk* in *Bamidbar* 31:23, where the Torah teaches us the laws of *kashering* utensils that have become not kosher: "Everything that comes in contact with fire should be cleansed with fire and, thus, purified." One who feels a fire of lust burning within him, a passion for sin – or that his heart is being consumed by the fires of rage – should extinguish it; overwhelming fire with fire. He should kindle a different fire in his heart – a fire of *kedushah*, holiness. If he does so, he will succeed in quashing the fire of wrongdoing. He will fight fire with fire.

The story is told that the *Yismach Moshe* once traveled to visit his *Rebbe*, the holy *Chozeh m'Lublin*. At that time there was no *mikveh* in Lublin, so the *Yismach Moshe* went to immerse himself in a nearby river. When he came into the "office" of his *Rebbe*, the *Chozeh* looked at his wet *payos* and asked, "Where did you immerse yourself? There is no proper *mikveh* in Lublin." The

*Yismach Moshe* replied that he had gone to the river. The *Chozeh* responded, “Our tradition is that, if there is no *mikveh*, one should immerse himself in fire.” He was not saying that one should enter a fiery furnace; rather, he implied that if one confronts an internal passion which is pulling him the wrong way, he should immerse himself in an internal fire - by filling himself with a fiery passion to serve Hashem.

In order to serve Hashem with all one’s heart, he must first possess a heart. One should develop an intellectual appreciation, which in itself indicates that he is aware of what is taking place in his life. A deeper and more profound level of appreciation is found within the heart, whereby a person has passionate cognition of a given situation and expresses his appreciation effusively. Perhaps, this might be one way (one of many ways) of describing **Horav Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, zl**, the *Klausenberger Rebbe*.

The *Rebbe* lost everything to the Nazis: a wife and eleven children; a life of holiness and purity; a community of followers and students. Indeed, when the *Rebbe* arrived in New York on *Erev Shabbos*, people expected to see the broken shard of an individual who exemplified *malchus haTorah*, the monarchy of Torah. This is not what they saw. Throngs of Jews, themselves survivors of the Holocaust, many who, like the *Rebbe*, had lost just about everything, walked through the streets of Williamsburg to somehow catch a glimpse, greet, *daven* with, this holy *tzaddik*, righteous person. They were shocked at what they saw.

Entering the *bais hamedrash*, one immediately heard the *Rebbe*’s powerful voice rising above the din. In his book *Warmed by a Fire*, Rabbi Yisrael Besser describes the scene. The *Rebbe* was the *Shliach Tzibur*, leading the service, and reciting the prayer of *Modim anachnu Lach*, “We thank You,” which is read towards the end of *Shemoneh Esrai*. The exuberance and passion that accompanied his tears of gratitude were palpable. As the *Rebbe* repeated the words of gratitude, his mood swept the crowd, as they too, all joined in by reflecting upon their personal gratitude to Hashem. Here was a man plucked from the edge of pain and despair by Hashem, and he was expressing his gratitude. He did not focus on the negativity felt by many after losing so much. They had all suffered, but they were here, having been granted a chance at rebuilding what they once had. Every moment of life was for him a gift of infinite kindness. Regardless of how much he had lost, one must remember the alternative, the flip-side – and look at the positive.

Indeed, this was the *Rebbe*’s message that *Shabbos* morning. He related the story of a Jew who had lost his entire *farneigin*, worldly possessions, in a fire. This now-destitute Jew approached a close friend and asked for a small loan – enough money to purchase a small bottle of whiskey. After purchasing the bottle, he proceeded to the *shul*, and, together with his friends, finished off the contents of the bottle. He then broke out into a spirited dance, singing the words, *Shelo asani goy*, “For He has not made me a gentile.” While everyone was happy to see that he was approaching forced retirement with a smile, he appeared to be taking his joy to an unprecedented level.

He explained what seemed to be his strange behavior, “If I would be a gentile, not only would I

have lost my home, my money and all my possessions, I would have also lost my god. I am, however, a *Yid*, whose G-d is indestructible. I may no longer have a home, money, or material possessions, but I still have Hashem Who will never leave me. This is why I dance.”

Here was a man who had every reason to be negative. Yet, he chose to seek out that positive ember beneath the pile of smoldering ruin. This was the *Rebbe's* message. Veritably, I have lost everything but I still have Hashem. With this attitude, he succeeded in rebuilding his life and the lives of so many others.