

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
TZAV

בְּשִׁבְתִּיכָא

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אור ישראל
Living Life Deeper

PILOT LIGHT

Tzav opens with directions to the *kohanim* regarding the ongoing maintenance of the *Mizbeach*. One job given to the *kohanim* is in regards to the fire burning on the *Mizbeach*. The *kohanim* are told that they may not allow the fire to go out, and are to feed wood to the fire daily.¹

The first *Beis Hamikdash* stood for four hundred and ten years. This means that the fire burnt continuously for over four centuries! Though the *kohanim* were required to maintain the fire through physical means, the reality is that the fire was of a spiritual nature. The fire simply could not be put out. In all of this time, neither rain nor wind extinguished the fire, despite the *Mizbeach* standing in the open air.²

The Chasam Sofer³ (Reb Moshe Sofer, 1762–1839) sees a deeper message in the fire of the *Mizbeach*. He explains that every Jewish person is compared to the *Beis Hamikdash*. Just like the *Beis Hamikdash* had a fire that could not be put out, we too have a ‘fire’ that cannot be extinguished. Though we may do *aveiros*, or think that we’ve done things that permanently distance us from Hashem, we have to understand - the fire of Torah and *mitzvos* exists within us, and will always exist within us, no matter what we have done or how we feel.

If that is the case, does it really matter what we do? Yes! Like the fire on the *Mizbeach*, we must ‘feed’ the fire, growing the fire of loving Hashem, and caring for others. Our actions should be done with fire, with emotion, and with feeling. We may *daven*, but we can increase our feeling in our *tefillos*. We may learn, but we can increase our connection to Torah.

There is so much potential in each of us, so many opportunities to grow our personal flame. It is important to remember this dual nature - that though we may be down, we are never beaten, and at the same time, it is essential that we do what we can to grow into the best person that we can be.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Our thoughts create our feelings - if we think that we are low, perhaps even hopeless, we will feel that way. On the other hand, if we think that we have great potential, and that we can accomplish great things, we will feel that way as well.

One way to influence our thinking is to use concrete examples from our own lives. Remind ourselves of times where we accomplished something that we didn’t think we’d be able to, even if the accomplishment may seem relatively minor.

Remember that one time you took care of your younger sibling by yourself? Or that time you reminded your father to lock the door, after he had forgotten? Or maybe even that time that you did better on the test than you expected.

Another method to affect our thinking is to repeat an idea, either out loud, or in our head. By constantly reminding ourselves that Hashem loves us, Hashem has given us great abilities, and He wants us to use them, we will eventually change our thinking, change our feelings, and change our life.

1 *Vayikra* 6:5

2 *Avos* 5:5

3 *Toras Moshe, ibid.* s.v. המזבח

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Do not forget to learn mussar every day, whether it is a lot or a little.

- *The Ba'al Shem Tov, quoted in Likutim Yekarim, 198*

INNER STRENGTH

Mrs. Esther Finkleman* was just about the sweetest person you'll ever meet. Soft-spoken and sincere, she reached thousands of people through her in-person lectures and her online speeches. Organizations from all over sought her as a motivational speaker, and she delivered, inspiring many to grow in their *middos* and *avodas Hashem*.

A standard story she says as part of her presentation is her own backstory, the story that started her on the path to where she is now. "As a young lady, and young mother, I used to have a terrible temper. It affected my children, my husband, and most of all, it affected me. I would alienate my family and friends - people would be afraid to speak to me, because they would certainly hear from me if they said something that I deemed offensive.

"Now, I knew that I needed to change, but I simply was not able. I felt that I didn't have it in me, that I didn't have a patient bone in my body. All that changed one day when I was out shopping. I was in a rush to get home, and of course the store was filled with people. I felt my anger building up inside of me, and then, out of nowhere, a child knocked me with his shopping cart. Ouch! I saw the child's mother coming up behind him, and I was ready to really give it to her. But something inside of me stopped me, and I held my tongue. I was fuming mad, and I certainly gave her a glare, but that was the extent of it.

"A minute later, another woman came over to me, all smiles. 'I saw what happened, how frustrated you were. I also saw how you held back and didn't say anything. I just wanted to tell you how impressive that was, I think that most people in your situation would have said something. You must be a really calm person to have been able to do that!'

"I was so stunned by what she said that I could only muster a weak, 'thank you' before she moved on. But her words rang in my ears, over and over again. She was certainly wrong; I was not a calm person! And yet... somehow, somewhere within me, I had the ability to stay (relatively) calm in the face of turmoil. And that, my friends, was the beginning of my change.

"You see, once I realized that I did have the ability to stay calm, despite all of my past failures and mistakes, I latched on to it with all my might. I congratulated myself every time I reacted in a more calm fashion, even if I did get angry. That ability grew and grew until it seems almost natural, at this point.

"My dear friends, we all have hidden abilities, abilities to overcome our greatest challenges. It's there, and it's waiting for us to find it, to nurture it, and to reveal it to the world."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the greatest *talmidei chachamim* may do *mitzvos* out of habit and not with feeling.¹
- The fire in one's soul, through its connection to Hashem, is the source of *ahavas Hashem*.²
- Even if one hears from Hashem that Hashem considers him to be too far gone to do *teshuvah*, he can still do *teshuvah*!³

1 *Mesillas Yesarim*, Introduction

2 *Alei Shur*, Vol. II p. 483

3 *Medrash Shmuel*, Avos 4:28. ושמעתיה

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