

TIMELESS TORAH

TETZAVAH : BUILDING GREATNESS THROUGH CONSISTENT COMMITMENT

Harnessing the Power of Routine

Our lives often seem governed by routine. From the moment we wake to the quiet rituals that end our day, our lives unfold through patterns and routines. We move through familiar schedules – school, work, meals, rest – rarely questioning the repeated rhythms that shape our time. These patterns give structure to our days, guiding our choices and behaviours in ways both subtle and profound. Though they may seem ordinary, routines quietly govern how we think, act, and grow.

Having completed the instruction of the main implements of the Mishkan in Parshat Terumah, Parshat Tetzaveh teaches how the Mishkan is meant to be used, namely, that it should be serviced by distinguished people – *Kohanim* – clothed in specific garments, and it should be inaugurated in the manner that the verses specify. In this context, explains the Ibn Ezra, the first two verses of the parshah, which mention how the Menorah should be lit, are to be taken as a vital introduction: the first element to be placed in the Mishkan is the pure light of the Menorah, paralleling Creation itself, which began with *Vayehi Or* – Let there be light.

It is clear that the light of the Mishkan was not required in order to illuminate the dwelling place of Hashem, Who is the source of all light. Rather, as put by the Midrash, the light of the Menorah provides the inspiration for every Jewish person to elevate their own soul, which is compared to a flame. One of the laws of the kindling of the Menorah is that the kohen must ensure that he continues to kindle the wick until the flame is strong enough to rise of its own accord.

According to the Sfat Emet (d. 1905), this law is representative of how a person should approach their own spiritual growth. Although the spark of holiness might be hidden deep within, having successfully kindled it, the flame will then rise upwards strongly and faithfully by itself.

With these ideas in mind, we can perhaps appreciate the depth behind the dual meaning of a recurrent word in this week's parshah. The word *tamid*, used in various contexts throughout the parshah, often means 'constant'. In these verses about the lights of the Menorah, however, the word is used to mean 'consistently' – '*l'haalot ner tamid* – to consistently (i.e., every day) kindle the lights' (27:20). Perhaps, the lesson of this word is that when a person acts with regularity, consistently shaping their daily routine around Torah ideals, they create a constant inspiration that accompanies them all the time.

Clothes of Character

The notion of *tamid* in spirit even if not in act is also emphasised through the use of this word in the context of two of the priestly garments. Concerning the breastplate, the *choshen*, the verse explains that as the names of the twelve tribes are engraved on the stones of the breastplate, the *Kohen Gadol* would arouse the merit of the entire Jewish people constantly – *tamid* – when he entered the Sanctuary (28:29). Similarly, the *tzitz*, the golden headband engraved with the Divine Name, must be, in the words of the verse, 'upon his temple constantly' (28:38). Clearly, the Kohen Gadol wore these garments only when actively involved in the service of the Mishkan, so the word *tamid* seems inaccurate.



Contemporary Perspectives on the Weekly Parsha with Rabbi Dr Yoni Birnbaum

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When the *Kohen Gadol* was going about his everyday life, the names of the tribes were not hanging in front of him, nor was the Name of Hashem affixed to his forehead. The *tamid* referred to here, then, must be explained in a broader sense. The Seforno (d.1549) explains that the *choshen* hanging on the heart of the *Kohen Gadol* was meant to inspire him to pray for the welfare of the Jewish people. In a similar vein, it is evident that the *tzitz* was meant to instil the fear of Hashem in the *Kohen Gadol's* mind. These sentiments must be present constantly, even when the garments that inspire such attitudes are physically removed.

If we bear in mind the purpose of the priestly garments, this idea becomes even more significant. Connecting the word *begeg*, garment, with *pakad*, appointment, Rav Hirsch (d.1888) demonstrates that the significance of wearing particular garments is that they represent the ideal character of the *kohen*, rather than his actual nature. Through donning these clothes, the *kohen* makes a statement that he performs his role not because of who he is, but because of what he should be. The constant mindfulness of Hashem and the Jewish people that the *tzitz* and the *choshen* embody are absolute principles which are incumbent upon the *Kohen Gadol* to personify at all times.

Anchor in Life

After detailing the inauguration ritual, the Torah goes on to specify one of the critical roles of the *Mizbe'ach*: the *korban tamid*, which was a twice daily burnt offering of a yearling lamb. Here, we see once again the word *tamid* being used in the sense of consistent regularity rather than a constant presence, this time focused on the consistent

acts of the Jewish people. Although the *korbanot* referred to here were brought every day that the Beit HaMikdash stood, they are mentioned here in the context of the inauguration of the Mishkan.

As understood by Rav Hirsch, this is because the purpose of the Mishkan as the dwelling place for Hashem's Presence can only be attained if it becomes vital and dynamic through the constant acts of the Jewish people. At the heart of this vitality lies the essence of the service of a Jewish person. The *korban tamid* is dual in nature, with one lamb being offered in the morning and another towards evening. This is representative of the cyclical nature of life – it's ups and downs, fortunes and misfortunes. However haphazard life might seem to us, the regular nature of the *korban tamid* symbolises the anchor that pulls everything together. Whatever we might experience, a regular and unswaying commitment of faith will help us weather the storms of life, under the constant protection of God, Guardian of Israel.

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JOURNEY HOME

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