

## *Terumat HaDeshen: Taking Up the Ashes*

### 1. Rabbi Nehemia Polen

Vayikra will be read as handbook of intimacy--a guide to restoring relationships gone off track, and, even more focally, a handbook of establishing, maintaining, and augmenting *healthy* relationships.

### 2. Rabbi Avi Weiss, "The Importance of Terumat HaDeshen," Jewish Press, March 2015

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/the-importance-of-terumat-hadeshen/2015/03/26/>

A few years ago a husband and wife appeared before Rav Gifter, *rosh yeshiva* of Telz, asking him to rule on a family dispute. The husband, a member of Rabbi Gifter's kollel, felt that as one who studied Torah it was beneath his dignity to take out the garbage. His wife felt otherwise. Rabbi Gifter concluded that while the husband should in fact help his wife, he had no religious/legal obligation to remove the refuse.

The next morning, before the early services, the *rosh yeshiva* knocked at the door of the young couple. Startled, the young man asked Rabbi Gifter in. No, responded Rabbi Gifter, I've not come to socialize but to take out your garbage. You may believe it's beneath your dignity, but it's not beneath mine.

### 3. Leviticus 6:1-6

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: צוּ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר זֹאת תִּנְרַת הָעֹלָה הִוא הָעֹלָה עַל מוֹקְדֶהָ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה עַד־הַבֹּקֶר וְאֵשׁ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּוָּקֵד בּוֹ: וְלִבְשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מִדּוֹ בֹד וּמְכַנְסֵי־בַד יִלְבַּשׁ עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וְהָרִים אֶת־הַדָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת־הָעֹלָה עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשָׂמוּ אֵצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וּפָשַׁט אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְלִבַּשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הַדָּשָׁן אֶל־מַחֲוֵץ לְמַחֲנֶה אֶל־מְקוֹם טְהוֹר: וְהָאֵשׁ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּוָּקֵד בּוֹ לֹא תִכָּבֶה וּבֵעַר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר וְעֵרָף עָלֶיהָ הָעֹלָה וְהִקְטִיר עָלֶיהָ חֲלָבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים: אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תִּוָּקֵד עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה: {ס}

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Command Aaron and his sons thus: This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, which shall be burning on the hearth on the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning in it. The priest shall dress in his linen garment, with linen pants next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes from the fire consuming the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar. He shall then take off his garments and put on other garments and take out the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning in it, not to go out: every morning the priest shall burn on it the wood, lay out on it the burnt offering, and turn into smoke on it the fat parts of the peace offering. A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out.

### 4. Jeremiah 31:12-14

וּבָאוּ וְרִנְנוּ בְמְרוֹם-צִיּוֹן וְנִהְרְוּ אֶל-טוֹב יְהוָה עַל-דָּגָן וְעַל-תִּירֹשׁ וְעַל-יִצְהָר וְעַל-בְּנֵי-צֶאֱן וּבְקָר וְהִיטָה נֶפְשָׁם כְּגַן רִוְיָה וְלֹא-יִוָּסְפוּ לְדַאֲבָה עוֹד: אִז תִּשְׂמַח בְּתוֹלָה בְּמַחֹל וּבַחֲרִים וּזְקָנִים יִתְדוּ וְהַפְכֹתִי אֲבָלָם לְשִׂשׂוֹן וְנַחֲמָתִים וְשִׂמְחָתִים מִיגוֹנָם: וְרוֹיְתִי גִפְשׁ הַכֹּהֲנִים דָּשֶׁן וְעַמִּי אֶת-טוֹבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה: {פ}

They shall come and shout on the heights of Zion, radiant over the bounty of the Lord— over new grain and wine and oil, and over sheep and cattle. They shall fare like a watered garden; they shall never languish again. Then shall maidens dance gaily, young men and old alike. I will turn their mourning to joy; I will comfort them and cheer them in their grief. I will give the priests their fill of fatness (*dashen*), and My people shall enjoy My full bounty —declares the Lord.

### 5. Psalms 63:6

כְּמוֹ חֵלֶב וְדָשֶׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נֶפְשִׁי וְשִׂפְתַי רִנְנוֹת יְהִלֶּל־פִּי:

I am sated as with a rich (*dashen*) feast; I sing praises with joyful lips.

### 6. Mishna, Tamid 1:2, 1:4

א:ב

מִי שֶׁהוּא רוֹצֵה לְתַרֵם אֶת הַמְזֻבָּח, מִשְׁפִּים וְטוֹבֵל עַד שֶׁלֹא יָבֹא הַמְמַנֵּה. וְכִי בָאִיזוֹ שְׁעָה הַמְמַנֵּה בָּא. לֹא כָל הַעֲתִים שׁוֹוֹת, פְּעָמִים שֶׁהוּא בָּא מְקַרִיאת הַגְּבֵר, אוֹ סְמוּךְ לוֹ מְלֻפְנָיו אוֹ מְלֻאֲחָרָיו. הַמְמַנֵּה בָּא וְדוֹפֵק עֲלֵיהֶם, וְהֵם פְּתָחוּ לוֹ. אָמַר לָהֶן, מִי שֶׁטָּבַל יָבֹא וְיָפִיס. הַפִּיסוּ, זָכָה מִי שֶׁזָּכָה:

א:ד

מִי שֶׁזָּכָה לְתַרֵם אֶת הַמְזֻבָּח, הוּא יְתַרֵם אֶת הַמְזֻבָּח, וְהֵם אוֹמְרִים לוֹ, הִזְהַר שֶׁמֵּא תִגַע בְּכָלִי, עַד שֶׁתִּקְדַּשׁ יָדָיךָ וְרַגְלֶיךָ מִן הַפִּיּוֹר, וְהָרִי הַמְחַתֵּה נְתוּנָה בְּמַקְצוֹעַ בֵּין הַכֹּהֵן לְמְזֻבָּח, כְּמַעְרְבוֹ שֶׁל כֹּהֵן. אִין אָדָם נִכְנָס עִמּוֹ, וְלֹא נָרַ בְּיָדוֹ, אֲלֵא מְהִלָּה לְאוֹר הַמַּעְרָכָה. לֹא הָיוּ רוֹאִין אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא שׁוֹמְעִין אֶת קוֹלוֹ, עַד שֶׁשׁוֹמְעִין קוֹל הַעֵץ שֶׁעָשָׂה בֶן קָטִין מוֹכֵנִי לְפִיּוֹר, וְהֵן אוֹמְרִים הִגִּיעַ עֵת. קָדַשׁ יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו מִן הַפִּיּוֹר, נָטַל מִחַתַּת הַכֶּסֶף וְעָלָה לְרֹאשׁ הַמְזֻבָּח, וּפָנָה אֶת הַגְּחָלִים הַיְלָה וְהִילָה, חָתָה מִן הַמַּאֲכָלוֹת הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת, וְיָרַד.

1:2

**Whoever wants to remove the ashes from the altar rises early and immerses himself in a ritual bath. He must immerse before the appointed priest arrives. And at what time does the appointed priest arrive? The times of his arrival are not all the same. There are times that he comes at the call of the rooster [*hagever*], or he might come at an adjacent time, either before the call of the rooster or after it. The appointed priest arrived at the Chamber of the Hearth, and he knocked on the gate to alert them to open the gate for him. And when they opened the gate for him, he said to them: Whoever immersed in the ritual bath may come and participate in the lottery. They then conducted the lottery, and whoever won that lottery won the privilege to perform the rite of the removal of the ashes.**

1:4

The priest **who won** the lottery **to remove the ashes from the altar shall then remove the ashes. And** the other priests **say** to him: **Be careful that you do not touch the vessel until you**

sanctify your hands and your feet from the Basin. The coal pan is placed in the corner between the ramp and the altar, on the western side of the ramp. No person would enter with the priest who was removing the ashes. And there was no lamp in his hand. Rather, he would walk by the light of the arrangement of wood on the altar. The other priests would not see him, nor could they hear the sound of his steps. They were therefore unaware of his progress until they heard the sound of the wood that ben Katin crafted into a mechanism [mukhani] of pulleys that was used to sink the Basin. They said to each other: The time for sanctifying hands and feet has come. The priest sanctified his hands and his feet with water from the Basin. He then took the silver coal pan and ascended to the top of the altar. The priest cleared the upper layer of coals to this side and scooped into the coal pan the inner coals that were completely consumed. He then descended the ramp.

#### 7. Song of Songs 2:12-14

הַנְּצַנִּים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ עֵת הַזִּמְרִיר הַגִּיעַ וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר נִשְׁמַע בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ: הַתְּאֵנָה חֲנֻטָּה פְּגִיחַ  
וְהַגִּפְנִים | סְמָדָר גִּתְנוּ גֵיחַ קוֹמִי (לְכִי) [לָדָּךְ] רַעֲיָתִי יִפְתִּי וְלִכְיִי־לָדָּךְ: {ס} יוֹנָתַי בְּחַגְנֵי הַסֶּלַע בְּסֶתֶר  
הַמְּדַרְגָּה הִרְאִינִי אֶת־מְרְאִיךָ הַשְּׂמִיעֵנִי אֶת־קוֹלְךָ כִּי־קוֹלְךָ עָרֵב וּמְרְאִיךָ נְאוּהָ: {ס}

The blossoms have appeared in the land,  
The time of pruning has come;  
The song of the turtledove  
Is heard in our land.  
The green figs form on the fig tree,  
The vines in blossom give off fragrance.  
Arise, my darling;  
My fair one, come away!  
“O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks,  
Hidden by the cliff,  
Let me see your face,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet  
And your face is comely.”

#### 8. Rabbi Yakov Nagen, The Soul of the Mishna

התבוננות במשנה מעלה יסוד חשוב בעבודת ה'. פסגת הקשר עם הקב"ה, מימוש האהבה והאינטימיות המתוארת בשיר השירים, מושגת במשנה על ידי תרומת הדשן, פעולה יומיומית שנראית כפינוי הזבל על גבי המזבח... דרך זו למימוש חזון האהבה שבשיר השירים נראית לי נכונה גם בקשר שבין איש לאישה – תשומת הלב לפרטים הקטנים של החיים וצורכי היום-יום של בן הזוג או בת הזוג היא הדרך להראות אהבה. וככל שהפרטים זעירים יותר, הם מעידים על גודלה של האהבה

#### 9. Sefat Emet, Parashat Tzav, 5635 and 5647-5648

תרל"ה

זאת תורת העולה כו' מצות תרומת הדשן. וקשה למה נקרא זאת תורת העולה שהיא מצוה אחרונה אחר כל קרבנות היום. ומשמע שכל הקרבן תלוי בהרמת הדשן. כי הגה עולה באה על הרהור הלב כמאמרם ז"ל היא העולה מחשבה רעה דאתוקדא על גבי מדבחא. והוא שריפת החטאת. אך אחר ביעור השאור צריכין להרים הדשן כי כל ירידה הוא צורך עליה. והרי הכל בכלל בריאת השי"ת.

כמאמר בורא חושך. והוא לבוא על ידי שריפת הרע אל הטוב. ואז נגמר המכוון. נמצא כי הרמת הדשן עיקר הקרבן... גם היא העולה על מוקדה. שכל העליות הם כפי המסירות נפש שיש לאדם:

תרמ"ז-תרמ"ח

ומצות הרמת הדשן הוא לרמוז כי כפי מה ששורפין הפסולת נעשה מזה עליה בכל יום ועי"ז יורד הארה חדשה אח"כ. ובכל יום ויום נמצא אלה התיקונים.

5635

"This is the law of the Olah (burnt offering)" - the mitzvah of terumat ha-deshen. This is difficult: Why is this called the law of the burnt offering when it is the last mitzvah after all of the sacrifices of the day? The Olah comes (to atone) for the thoughts of the mind; as the Zohar says: "That is the Olah: the bad thoughts of a person that are burned on the altar." This refers to the burning of the sin. However, in the aftermath of the burning of the "yeast" (the evil inclination) one needs to raise the ash, because every descent is for the purpose of ascent. Everything is included in God's creation, as they say: "He (God) creates darkness," and this means by burning the evil, one reaches the good. This fulfills the intention (of the sacrifice). Hence the raising of the ash is the ultimate purpose of the sacrifice... "It is the burnt offering, which shall be burning on the hearth" – all of the ascents happen through the complete devotion that a person has.

5647-5648

The commandment here to remove the ashes hints that as we burn up the waste in our lives we are uplifted each day, and then we are given new light. This redemptive process is with us every single day (translation of 5647-5648 by Rabbi Arthur Green).

#### **10. Prof. Jonathan Grossman, "Taking Up and Taking Out the Ashes: Constancy and Change in Leviticus," Tradition, Spring 2022**

Bringing these two commandments under the same title creates a delicate dialogue between stability and change, between regularity/continuity and flux; both are exhibited every morning, together, side by side. The Divine revelation that is represented by the fire is unchanging and eternal. God is present in this place all the time, day and night; it does not matter what day we are talking about. In contrast, the person, who brings the sacrifice and brings the flesh for the offering, is a new and different book each day. His standing before God one day is not the same as his religious consciousness another day. It is possible that on Monday, he will bring a burnt offering, and on Tuesday, he will want to bring a peace offering. As a result, the flesh is cleared off the altar each day, in order to enable the person to express something new on the altar, while the fire that receives the offering is perpetual and constant.

The ashes on the altar represent the encounter between the person, who is transient, temporary, and always changing, and the presence of God, which is constant and immutable. The ashes are "taken up" in order to testify to this complex encounter, and they are taken out in order to clear space for the Temple service of the new day.