

## **Terumas haDeshen: Batting Clean Up** **Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

Parshas Tzav begins with a portion of the service of the Kohanim which at first glance can be easily overlooked. It is commonly referred to as the Terumas HaDeshen, the removal of the ashes from the mizbeach. Each night the limbs and fats which needed to be burned were left to burn overnight and a pile of ash was all that remained by morning. At first blush the Trumas HaDeshen, which was the first part of the Avodah each day, seems to be just a housekeeping requirement. A deeper look reveals much more.

When we look at the Talmud (Tamid 28b) for a description of the service it doesn't match our expectations. Although this service did include the removal of the ashes outside the city when necessary, the daily function was to take some of the ash and place it on the Eastern part of the ramp leading to the Mizbeach. What was the meaning of this? For this to be the beginning of the Avodah it should contain a central idea to the service of the Temple and by extension to our service of Hashem.

Additionally when we look at the words of the pasuk we are surprised. The verb we would expect to find in terms of the service would be to clean or remove the ashes. However, the Torah tells us *v'herim* (Vayikra 6:3), and lift up. This points once again to the fact that Terumas HaDeshen was not, in its essence, just to clean the Mizbeach for another day of service.

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 131) explains that the purpose of this Mitzva was to bring majesty to the Temple. This seems born out by the actual removal of the ashes but again the placing of the ashes on the ramp seems unnecessary and counterproductive. The Kohanim would also vie for the opportunity to perform this task and a lot was drawn to decide who would be privileged to complete this service.

The Shlah quotes a beautiful idea to explain the deeper significance of the Trumas HaDeshen. He explains that after a person goes through the Teshuva process and truly changes their ways we find that we are no longer allowed to mention their past to them (see Bava Metziah 58b). Mistakes need to be learned from and not simply forgotten. However, once we have used them to propel us forward in our development, we can't let them bog us down and prevent further growth. So too after the meat of the sacrifice has been devoured and there is only ash left that ash is to be raised up and given a place of respect. A soul cleansed of sin must be looked at with fresh eyes. Once we have dealt with the past and learned from it properly, it must not depress us or hold us back. As the Talmud (Berachos 34b) says, 'In a place where those who have repented stand, even Tzaddikim can't stand.'

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch has a similarly insightful explanation. He views the act of Terumas HaDeshen as a symbol of continuance of the Temple service. It is a reminder that each day in the Temple they continued a process which connected them back to the very groundwork

laid by the Avos. I think we can see the service of the Temple as a template for the service of the community. This idea is fundamental to communal work. Whatever strides we make in our development of the community and its infrastructure we must always recall that we are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us. I recently had the pleasure of hearing an octogenarian Rabbi speak of his experiences in America as a child. He spoke about the open anti-Semitism in the streets and the paucity of kosher food outside of New York. It was only through the efforts of the previous generations that we are able to stand where we are today. We must raise this up before our eyes each day and remember the rich legacy that we carry on and the broad shoulders which helped us get where we are today.

*Madua v.s Lamah - the idea of teshuva is to move forward (li mah only)*