

# The Path To Follow

Tzav

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## The Importance of Performing Mitzvot with Zeal

It is written, “Command Aaron and his sons, saying: ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering: It is the burnt-offering [that stays] on the flame, upon the altar...’” (Vayikra 6:2). If we examine the verses before us, we will be surprised by numerous things. I would like to explain these issues one by one, and we shall see how they can be answered.

On this verse, Rashi cites the following teaching from the Sages: “The term tzav [command] always implies urging for the present and also for future generations. Rabbi Shimon taught, ‘Scripture especially needs to urge where monetary loss is involved [such as in the case of a burnt-offering, where he derives no monetary benefit from it]’” (Torat Kohanim 6:1).

This presents a problem: Why did Aaron and his sons need to be specifically encouraged to bring burnt-offerings? Was Aaron demonstrating slack in bringing an offering because it was entirely burned, such that he needed special encouragement to do so? Although the kohanim lived off the sacrifices and offerings that were their share from the Children of Israel, we cannot say that they delayed in bringing offerings to Hashem because of greed. We cannot say that the verse therefore had to encourage Aaron and his sons, as well as the generations to come, not to demonstrate any slack in bringing an offering, which entailed a financial loss!

Furthermore, why was it precisely the Kohen Gadol who had to carry the ashes outside the camp, as it is written: “He shall remove the ashes to outside the camp” (Vayikra 6:4)? Could another kohen not have carried the ashes outside the camp?

Let us try and explain these issues as best possible. We are fully aware that G-d’s will is for us to always obey Him, in which case there will be no need to bring offerings, since there is no need for offerings without sin. This was only necessary because of the sin of the golden calf, which required the construction of the Sanctuary and the bringing of offerings. In fact since the Satan returned to the Children of Israel after the sin of the golden calf, a great deal of wisdom and caution is required to escape it.

This is why, when a person wants to fulfill a mitzvah to the degree of perfection required to proclaim G-d’s oneness, he must pay much more attention to it. This is because the evil inclination

nourishes itself even more from mitzvot that are done for the sake of G-d, especially mitzvot from which a person can derive no benefit because they are performed entirely for Hashem. In regard to these mitzvot, the evil inclination definitely wants to make a person stumble. Hence we must pay extra attention to such mitzvot, in order for the evil inclination not to have any part in them.

One example would be the prohibition against eating pork. No Jew would even think of wanting to eat pork, which the Torah prohibits. Yet at the very moment that pork is served to a Jew, the evil inclination places in his heart the idea of definitely not eating it, since it is disgusting. However when a person thinks that pork is forbidden to eat because it is disgusting, he thereby ruins the perfection of the mitzvah to not eat pork.

In fact the real reason for the prohibition against eating pork is that the Torah has forbidden it, as it is written: “A person should not say, ‘I am disgusted by pork...’ Instead he should say, ‘I want it, but what can I do? My Father in Heaven has forbidden it!’” (Sifra and Rashi on Vayikra 20:26). It is only in this way that we perfectly fulfill the mitzvah of not eating pork.

From here we realize that when the evil inclination sees that it cannot prevent a person from fulfilling a mitzvah, it still does all that it can to ruin the degree of perfection to which it is fulfilled. As for the prohibition against eating pork, which is a small, easy mitzvah, the evil inclination hurries to tell a person not to eat it because pork is disgusting and unhealthy. Thus he will not eat it on the one hand, but on the other hand he will abstain from eating it not to fulfill the mitzvah, but only for the sake of his health.

The same applies to every mitzvah. The evil inclination tries to weaken man in his attempt to fulfill mitzvot to perfection. Since it has considerable power, it gives a person secondary reasons for why he must fulfill a mitzvah or avoid a transgression. Above all, it also wants to push a person into not thinking for even a second about fulfilling mitzvot for the sake of Heaven. Thus the evil inclination makes a person instantly lose, on the one hand, what he has gained on the other. That is why we must be careful to quickly fulfill mitzvot when given the opportunity, thus preempting the Satan from coming to stir up trouble.

We learn this great, extremely important principle from Aaron. Let no one suspect him of having delayed in bringing a burnt-offering, which was entirely for Hashem, by worrying about what he was going to gain instead of worrying about Hashem’s honor. On the contrary, it is precisely because it was such an easy mitzvah – having certainly been fulfilled in accordance with Hashem’s will, given that it was good for all the generations – that the Torah warns us in regards to the easiest mitzvot, that no one should dare not to fulfill them, but must pay considerably greater attention to them. In fact among mitzvot of this kind, the Satan is able to disturb a person easily enough.

Since the Torah wrote this, it means that it has deeply probed the heart of man. The evil inclination is a reality in this world, and it is capable of leading man to worrying about a financial loss, meaning a secondary idea accompanied by a certain degree of laziness, in order for him not to fulfill mitzvot to perfection.

This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moshe to tzav (“command”), meaning that he was to encourage the fulfillment of this mitzvah in the most unselfish way possible, for it comprised a financial loss. As a result, the evil inclination has more ability to disrupt the intentions of the kohen, which is why he must see the deed to its very end, as it is said: The end of a deed must be done with the same intention as at the beginning. This means that when we start a mitzvah, we must envision the final result.

Hence it is precisely the Kohen Gadol who must carry the ashes outside the camp, even if it seems below his dignity. He does this in order to act for the sake of Heaven. In this way, he will consider himself as secondary and unimportant in comparison to G-d. He will consider himself as the dust of the earth for the sake of His Name, and he will do everything for the honor of G-d, without allowing the evil inclination to disturb him.

This is completely understandable. A man who sees himself as completely annulled before Hashem will not pay attention to a financial loss. This is because one who views himself as being dead, and who is called upon to become dust and ashes, pays no attention whatsoever to money or financial loss.

### ***Tevilah: The Immersion of Vessels***

The sanctity and purity of the Jewish people rests on the Jewish table, on the kashrut of the food they eat and the kashrut of the kitchen utensils they use. In fact we have been given numerous warnings in the holy Torah that enjoin us to be careful about unkosher food, food that must not appear on the table of a Jew.

One particular passage in the Torah is devoted to the kashering of vessels, and how we must immerse them in a mikveh holding a volume of 40 seahs, meaning kitchen utensils that have been acquired from a non-Jew, whether or not they have been used before. Some commentators have explained the reason behind this as being to remove the spirit of impurity and name of non-Jews from these vessels, and to bring them into the realm of Israel's sanctity, given that Hashem chose us as a heritage, separated us from those who err, and sanctified us with His holiness, as it is written: "I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine" (Vayikra 20:26).

The laws regarding the kashering of vessels are particularly relevant in our time, during the days prior to Passover, when many individuals purchase new kitchen utensils for the sake of the approaching holiday.

We shall present a summary of the relevant halachot as a helpful guide to the public:

1. The Rishonim have written that everything which comes into contact with food is called a keli seuda ("food utensil"), even if we do not eat or drink out of it. Utensils into which we do not place food directly, but only through the intermediary of a pan or any kind of mold – such as a "Shabbat Plata," electric burner, oven and the like – do not require tevilah [immersion in a mikveh].

2. From the Torah, we must only immerse vessels made of metal. The Sages have instituted tevilah for glass vessels as well (since it is a material that is akin to metal, given that if a glass vessel breaks, it can be melted down and reshaped).

3. We usually immerse porcelain vessels without reciting the blessing. Some have adopted the stringency of also immersing plastic vessels, but without reciting the blessing.

4. Vessels that are used only once are not immersed. It is therefore not necessary to immerse plates, glasses, and the like if they are only going to be used once. Containers made of aluminum foil, which we throw away after being used once, are also not immersed.

5. Electric devices into which food is placed directly, such as an electric kettle, a stove, an electric pot, or a toaster, must be immersed.

6. One should make certain that the electric device is completely immersed within the water of the mikveh.

7. Since numerous electric devices are liable to be damaged if immersed in water, it is preferable not to use them for a few days after immersing them, until they have completely dried out and there is no trace of humidity in them. It is preferable to dry them with hot air (using a hair dryer).

8. In regards to electric devices that are liable of becoming unusable if placed in water, there are several options in regards to tevilah:

- If an electric device no longer becomes classified as a "utensil" when it is disassembled, and if it can only be reassembled by a specialist, not just by anyone, then we can give it to a Jewish electrician to disassemble. He will thereby make it lose the status of a utensil, at which point he can reassemble it. In this way, it will have been "made" by a Jew. (It is the main body of the device that must be disassembled, not just an exterior component, such as an electric cable and the like.)

- Another possibility is to take a piece of cloth, dip it in the water of the mikveh, and wring out the water while leaving it just wet enough to transfer humidity to something else (tofeach al manat lehatpiach). We then place this piece of cloth on the device where the electric wire enters, and then we immerse the entire device in this way.

9. If we have used a utensil without immersing it, the food that makes contact with that utensil is not forbidden to eat. However we must remove it from the utensil immediately. In any case, even if we have cooked something in a utensil 100 times, it must still be immersed.

10. We must kasher a utensil that requires kashering (by means of hagalah – in boiling water) before immersing it in a mikveh.

11. Before tevilah, we must remove all stickers on a utensil, scratch off the glue, and remove all other dirt or stains in order to eliminate any barrier (chatzitza) between the utensil and the water.

12. In regards to the blessing that we recite for tevilah, we say it in Hebrew before immersing a vessel (even if it is made of glass, which we immerse only by rabbinic decree). Translated, the blessing is as follows: "Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the immersion of a vessel [al tevilat keli]." If we are immersing two or more vessels, we say "of vessels [al tevilat kelim]."

13. We must immerse a vessel in a single action, in such a way that the water reaches all of its parts, inside and out, at the same time, leaving nothing outside of the water.

14. We should handle a vessel as loosely as possible. If we have wet our hands in the water of the mikveh before taking hold of a vessel, there is no reason to worry about chatzitza (a barrier from the water), since the water of the mikveh will reach all its parts. Even in that case, however, we should not hold a vessel tightly.

15. When we immerse several small vessels at once, glasses, small glasses, lids, etc., it is preferable to place them in a well-spaced net. They should be placed side by side in the net, not one on top of the other.

16. A minor must not perform tevilah, unless there is an adult present to make sure that he is doing it correctly.

Here is a short list of materials used in making vessels, along with the corresponding laws (taken from the book *Tevilat Kelim*):

Stainless steel – Tevilah with the blessing

Aluminum – Tevilah with the blessing

Asbestos – No Tevilah

Silver – Tevilah with the blessing

Earthenware (non-glazed) – No Tevilah

Earthenware (glazed) – No Tevilah

Bakelite – No Tevilah

Wood – No Tevilah

Copper – Tevilah with the blessing

Duralex – Tevilah with the blessing

Enamel – Tevilah without the blessing

Iron – Tevilah with the blessing

Metal – Tevilah with the blessing

Nylon – Various opinions

Gold – Tevilah with the blessing

Paper – No Tevilah

Stone – No Tevilah

Plastic – Various opinions

Porcelain – Tevilah without the blessing

Pyrex – Tevilah with the blessing

Glass – Tevilah with the blessing

## ***Guard Your Tongue!***

### ***Silence is Preferable***

If someone has fallen into the sin of listening to Lashon Harah, he should immediately make every effort to look for a pretext to justify the person being disparaged. He should strive to remove resentment for that person from the heart of the speaker, and thus retroactively rectify his transgression.

If he knows the speaker and realizes that the more he tries to justify the person being disparaged, the more the speaker will disparage him, then it is clear that he should remain silent. Then, when the speaker leaves, it is a mitzvah for the listener to explain to other listeners how what he said can be interpreted in the subject's favor, and he should try to remove any ill-feelings that they may have developed in their heart as a result of what they heard.

– Chafetz Chaim

### Doing versus Studying

It is written, “This is the law of the burnt-offering: It is the burnt-offering” (Vayikra 6:2).

In his book *Ohr David*, Rabbi David Cohen of Constantine explained the redundant expression “the burnt-offering” based upon the teachings of Mishnah Peah. He states, “These are the deeds of man, which he does, and from which he enjoys the fruits in this world, while the principle remains for him in the World to Come.”

The commentators question the need for both words, *oseh otam* (which he does), which seem unnecessary.

Addressing this issue, the Gemara replies: “Whosoever occupies himself with studying the laws of the sin-offering is as if he were offering a sin-offering” (Menachot 110a). One may be liable to think, “Since we are rewarded for studying the passages in the Torah that deal with commandments, it’s not necessary to actually do them! I’ll just study them!”

This is nonsense, nothing other than the advice of the evil inclination. We only receive a reward for studying the laws relating to a commandment if we cannot actually perform it. If it consists of a commandment that we can perform, studying it will obviously not exempt a person from doing so. This is what the Mishnah is alluding to by repeating the words *oseh otam* (which he does). It stresses the fact that he will only have a “reward” when he actually does it.

From here we may deduce that the redundant expression “the burnt-offering” indicates that it is precisely an *olah* (“burnt-offering”) that we are unable to perform, and which may be replaced by studying the passage related to it. The Torah considers studying it as the fulfillment of the mitzvah. However such not the case for other mitzvot, those which people have the ability to do.

### It Never Spoiled

It is written, “The earthenware vessel in which it [the offering] was cooked must be broken. But if it was cooked in a copper vessel, it is to be purged and rinsed with water” (Vayikra 6:21).

Rashi explains that it must be broken “because the liquid absorbed in it becomes ‘left over,’ and the same is true of all offerings.” The Rishonim had difficulty understanding Rashi’s explanation. In fact according to Rabbeinu Tam, food spoils when it remains overnight, which then brings it into the category of “that which gives an altered taste.” Thus the prohibition regarding absorption no longer applies. That being the case, why must an earthenware vessel be broken, while a copper vessel must only be purged and rinsed?

The Rav answers this question based on the words of our Sages in *Pirkei Avoth*, who list ten miracles which occurred in the Temple. One of these miracles was that meat never spoiled. Even the *shelamim* (peace offerings), which could be eaten over the span of two days and one night, never spoiled because the meat remained as good as on the day it was slaughtered.

General speaking, although remaining overnight alters the taste of meat, this did not apply to the meat of the Temple offerings, which never spoiled. It never rotted in a vessel, and therefore the food that was absorbed in it became “left over.” It is for this reason that the law is the following: “The earthenware vessel in which it was cooked must be broken. But if it was cooked in a copper vessel, it is to be purged and rinsed with water.”

### Right and Left

It is written, “This is the law of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering” (Vayikra 7:37).

The Rebbe of Kotzk explains that some people reach, by means of the Torah, the level of a “burnt-offering and the meal-offering,” meaning the summit of perfection. They achieve this through the selfless study of Torah and by sanctifying G-d through their actions and upright behavior. Conversely, other people only reach the level of a “sin-offering and guilt-offering;” by not conducting themselves as they should, they dishonor Him.

Our Sages have said that the Torah is “an elixir of life to those who stand at its right, and a deadly poison to those who stand at its left.” This idea is alluded to in the above verse: Those who stand at its right are people associated with the burnt-offering and the meal-offering, mentioned at the right side of the verse. Those who stand at its left are, on the contrary, associated with the sin-offering and the guilt-offering, mentioned at the left side of the verse.

## In the Light of the Parsha

### On What Does a Jew’s Happiness Depend?

According to one of my sons, the mitzvah that we have to bring offerings has two objectives: The first is to allow the kohanim to nourish themselves (from the meat of these offerings), and the second is to turn man away from sin. In fact we bring offerings in order to atone for sin. However offerings cost money, and we know that people will not quickly do something that makes them lose money. Thus before committing a transgression, a person will think of the expense that it is liable to cost him, and therefore be dissuaded from sinning.

At first glance, these two reasons contradict one another. If a person manages to turn away from sin, he will not bring any offerings. Yet in that case, how will the kohanim nourish themselves? Perhaps they will eat the voluntary offerings and thank-offerings? But these are not brought every day! They are only brought occasionally, after a person has been saved from some misfortune.

The solution to this apparent contradiction seems to me to be the following: By turning away from sin, a person opens his heart and fills it with great joy, for he will be living a life of holiness that is far from sin. He will then thank Hashem every day, and out of this joy he will bring many thank-offerings to G-d. It is from these offerings that the kohanim will be able to nourish themselves.

As King David said, “A psalm of thanksgiving. Call out to Hashem, all the earth. Serve Hashem in joy; come before Him with joyous song. ... Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise” (Tehillim 100:1-4).

What connection is there between serving G-d in joy and the thank-offerings?

The term “call out” in Hebrew is *hariou*, and it comes from the term *ra* (“evil”). This means that a person who considers a connection to materialism as being evil will turn away from it. He will distance himself from sin, and as a result he will rejoice. In this way, he will head to the Temple and bring a thank-offering to G-d, Who has enabled him to turn away from sin and to serve Him in joy.

## **Rabbi Yosef Karo** **The Author of Shulchan Aruch**

Rabbi Yosef Karo, known as the “Beit Yosef,” was among the greatest of the Acharonim (later codifiers). The author of the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Yosef Karo was born in 5248, and when he was four years old his family was expelled from Spain. They settled in the city of Kushta in Turkey, and the boy received most of his education from his father, a remarkable Torah scholar. In fact Rabbi Yosef Karo cites the commentaries of his father in several places throughout his work. After his father’s death, Rabbi Yosef Karo was raised in the home of his uncle, Rabbi Yitzchak Karo, who adopted him as his own son. From Kushta, he went to live in Adrianople, where he married the daughter of the scholar Rabbi Chaim Albag and established his own yeshiva. At the age of 34, he began to write his monumental work, known as Beit Yosef.

Diligence, persistent study, sanctity, and temperance in daily living were Rabbi Yosef Karo’s defining characteristics, and he often fasted and adopted austere measures for himself. He met Rabbi Shlomo Molcho, who was burned as a martyr for G-d, a death that the Beit Yosef envied for himself.

After he lost his first wife, Rabbi Yosef Karo married the daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak Sabba. He lived for a time in Nicopolis, a town in northern Bulgaria. Finally, he decided to move to Eretz Israel in order to benefit from the sanctity of the Holy Land and to complete his books. He moved to Sefat, where he settled down for good. There he was appointed to the Beit Din of Rabbi Yaakov Beirav, who gave him smicha. In Sefat, the Beit Yosef established a yeshiva where he taught Torah to multitudes of students, including Rabbi Moshe Alsheich and Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (the Ramak). Upon the passing of Rabbi Yaakov Beirav, the Beit Yosef succeeded him as the head of Sefat’s Beit Din, with Rabbi Moshe of Trani (the Mabit) at his side. The Beit Din of Sefat served as the central court for all the Jewish people, wherever they lived in the world, dealing with all matters without exception, just as the Sanhedrin did in former times.

It was in Sefat that the Beit Yosef wrote his greatest works, making him the spiritual leader of the generation as well as the Rav of the entire Jewish people. The vast influence of his invaluable books has never diminished since their appearance until the present day. The writing of his book Beit Yosef occupied him for 20 years, during which time he meticulously gathered the opinions of all the poskim for each point of Halachah. In cases where the poskim differed, he decided in favor of the majority. At first he thought of writing this book using the same format as the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah. Yet given that the Rambam only mentioned the Halachah that one must perform, without any commentary, the Beit Yosef preferred to write his book in such a way as to bring, for each Halachah, the majority decision of the poskim. Each time that the Rif, the Rosh, and the Rambam discussed a legal issue, and their opinions on a specific law eventually converged, that law was accepted. In cases when these “three pillars of teaching” diverged, he ruled in favor of the majority. If all three differed from one another, he looked to the works of the Ramban, the Rashba, and the Ran, and ruled according to their commentaries. Being Sephardic, he generally based himself upon the commentaries of Sephardic Torah scholars. He very rarely brought the views of Ashkenazi poskim, which earned him harsh criticism from the Torah scholars of Poland. When he finished writing Beit Yosef in 5302, he continued to perfect and enrich it for 12 more years. He then published a second edition in four volumes. The first was published in Venice during 5310-5311, the second in the same city in 5311, and the third was published in Savionita in 5313. Finally, the last volume was published in the same city in 5319.

When he finished this immense work, he summarized it in a book which concisely recorded the main elements of each Halachah, but without mentioning his sources. This yielded the Shulchan Aruch (“Prepared Table”). He completed the summary of the first volume in 5315.

The Shulchan Aruch very quickly became a reference work upon which all the greatest Torah scholars and commentators based themselves. Today it is considered as the keystone for all teachings on Jewish law. At first the book aroused tremendous opposition from the greatest Torah scholars of the east as well as the west. These scholars also vehemently opposed everyone who taught the Halachah of the Shulchan Aruch without consulting sources in the Talmud, for they believed that its extremely concise language could lead people astray. Yet it was western Torah scholars who had the greatest reservations about the book. They objected to the fact that it was entirely based on the viewpoint of prominent Sephardic poskim, without taking into account the views of the great rabbis of Poland or France. Among the Shulchan Aruch’s harshest critics was Rabbi Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal), Rabbi Meir of Lublin (the Maharam), and Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe (the Baal Halevushim). Yet it was Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Rema) who set himself apart by his criticism of the book, writing his own work entitled Darchei Moshe on the Arba Turim, thus creating an Ashkenazi version of the Beit Yosef. He also wrote a critique of the Shulchan Aruch in which he cited the opinions of poskim from Europe and the east. The Rema’s book was published along with the Shulchan Aruch in Krakow in 5338. In fact this critique actually helped the Shulchan Aruch, for it greatly aided in its dissemination. From that time on, the Shulchan Aruch was accepted by all Jewish communities. In fact from that point until the present time, the Shulchan Aruch has universally spread throughout the Jewish world, and many Torah scholars have written numerous commentaries on it. Even a summary of the Shulchan Aruch has been written. From the appearance of the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah until now, no other book has spread so widely and been so universally relied upon.

The Shulchan Aruch was first published in Venice in 5325. At its very beginning, the book was considered by its author as just a tool for general Torah study. Rabbi Yosef Karo also wrote Kesef Mishneh on the Rambam, in which he explains the works of the Rambam and clarifies his sources, since the Rambam did not cite sources in his work. Even the Maggid Mishneh of Rabbi Vidal of Toulouse, which preceded Rabbi Yosef Karo’s Kesef Mishneh, is not as thorough. By means of this book, Rabbi Yosef Karo attempted to answer all the objections that had been raised against the Rambam by the Raavad. His book also clarified the commentaries of the Maggid Mishneh. Rabbi Yosef’s Kesef Mishneh was published in Venice during the years 5334-5335, the first three volumes during his lifetime, and the last after his death. Since its publication, this commentary always accompanies the Rambam’s work.

Rabbi Yosef Karo’s noble soul and the purity of his character are reflected in his writings. His words are those of Torah scholars, words that were always brought forth with composure. Even when he brought remarks that contradicted his own, he always cited them with respect. The Chida tells us that in Rabbi Yosef Karo’s time, three men by the name of Yosef were able to compose Beit Yosef: Rabbi Yosef Taitzk, Rabbi Yosef Lev, and finally Rabbi Yosef Karo. Of course, G-d chose Rabbi Yosef Karo for this task because of his incredible modesty.

In the year 5324, Rabbi Yosef Karo’s second wife died, leaving him a son by the name of Shlomo. He then married the daughter of Rabbi Zechariah ben Shlomo Zavasil Ashkenazi, a great Torah scholar of Jerusalem. He was more than 80 years old when his son Yehudah was born. On Thursday, the 13th day of Nissan 5335, Rabbi Yosef Karo passed away at the age of 87, leaving behind a people mourning the loss of this great luminary.