



Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Tzav | Sichah 2

The Verse:

Regarding the Altar pyre, the Torah commands: “And the fire on the altar shall burn on it; it shall not go out...” (*Vayikra* 6:5) The following verse repeats the command: “A continuous fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not go out.” (*Vayikra* 6:6)

The Rashi:

A continuous fire — The fire regarding which it says (in the context of the *menorah* lamps), “continually (תָּמִיד)” (*Shemos* 27:20); this fire must also be kindled from the fire on the outer altar.

Rashi’s Intent:

Seemingly, Rashi is bothered by the unnecessary word “continuous.” Why was it inadequate for the Torah to say, “it shall not go out?” To address this, Rashi explains that the word “continuous” does not refer to the altar fire, but to another fire which is called “continuous” — the lamps of the *menorah* — alluding to the fact that this “continuous fire” was to be lit from the altar’s fire.

The Questions:

Why does Rashi — whose commentary focuses on the straightforward meaning of the verse — not offer a simpler explanation: That the Torah expressed the need for the flame to be constant with both a negative

formulation, “it shall not go out,” and a positive formulation, “a continuous fire,” in order to emphasize the importance of the fire burning continuously?

The Explanation:

Previously, in the context of the *menorah*'s lamps, Rashi explained that the word “continuous” does not literally mean without interruption. Rather, any consistent activity that is done every day or evening can be called “continuous.” Thus, the *menorah* lamps did not burn eternally; they were kindled “continually,” i.e. every evening. (*Rashi to Shemos 27:20*)

It follows that, according to Rashi, the clause “it shall not go out” refers to a longer duration than the word “continuous” does. Therefore, the Torah could not have said “a continuous fire” for emphasis, because it **detracts** from the longer duration implicit in the clause “it shall not go out.” This led Rashi to conclude that the clause “a continuous fire” refers to the *menorah*'s lamps.

Halachic Implications:

There are two ways of defining the obligation to light the *menorah* from the altar's flame.

- a) As a law concerning the *menorah* — to fulfill the requirements of lighting the *menorah*, it had to be lit from the altar's fire.
- b) As a law concerning the altar — the altar must be the source of the *menorah*'s fire.

The practical difference between these two formulations would be in a case in which there was a *menorah* but no altar. If the first definition is correct, then the *menorah* could not be lit without an altar from which to draw fire. If the second definition is correct, then the *menorah* could still be lit from another source, but when the altar functioned, the altar had to be the source of the fire for the *menorah*.

Rashi's wording, "this fire must also be kindled from the fire on the outer altar," implies that this is a law concerning the altar. The fire on the outer altar must be the source of the *menorah's* fire.

The Lesson:

The utensils that stood in the Holy (*kodesh*) section of the *Mishkan*, such as the *menorah*, allude to a person's internal spiritual work. Specifically, the *menorah* alludes to Torah study, for "a candle is a *mitzvah*, and Torah is the fire." The utensils that stood in the courtyard, such as the outer altar, allude to a person's efforts to influence others outside the sphere of Divine service.

Since the *menorah's* flames must be "continuous," a student may think that he cannot interrupt his studies to interact with those "on the outside."

Rashi's comment implies otherwise: In order for a person to truly achieve consistency and stability in his internal spiritual life, he must reach out to inspire those "on the outside." That is where his own eternal "fire" will come from.