

NEGLIGENCE IN TORAH STUDY IS A VERY GRAVE SIN

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The Path To Follow TZAV

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Flattery

It is written, "You shall not tachanifu [pollute] the land" (Numbers 35:33).

It is forbidden to flatter (lehachanif) a sinner. In the opinion of many great Torah figures (such as the Re'em, the author of Tosaphot, and Rabbi Shemuel Ibn Gabirol), this is an absolute prohibition that we learn from the above verse. A person who knows that his friend despises someone is commanded to reprimand him for his hatred. If instead he flatters his friend by speaking Lashon Harah about the person he hates, he transgresses this prohibition. This prohibition also applies to one who listens to Lashon Harah in order to flatter the speaker. It is very common for a person to nod his head in agreement, or even to add to the speaker's words in order to seek his approval and obtain favors from him. This constitutes flattery and is a very grave sin (see Shaarei Teshuvah, Gate 3, par.187-199).

At the beginning of this week's parsha we read, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying: 'This is the law of the burnt-offering. The burnt-offering shall be upon the hearth, upon the altar, all night'" (Leviticus 6:2). Here Rashi cites the Sages in stating, "The term tzav [command] always denotes urging for the present and also for future generations. Rabbi Simeon taught: 'Scripture especially needs to urge where monetary loss is involved'" (see Torat Kohanim 6:1).

The financial loss involved here is clear: A burnt-offering is entirely devoted to Hashem, and the owners derive absolutely nothing from it. Therefore they lose money by bringing their offering, which is precisely why they need to be encouraged to bring it. When we reflect upon this, however, we realize that encouragement is needed whenever a financial loss is involved. Who doesn't know how greatly people have to be encouraged today to study Torah and observe mitzvot, be they mitzvot between man and G-d or man and man? Why is this so? It is because a financial loss is involved in these mitzvot. In fact if a person loses his time, be it for a moment, this already constitutes a considerable loss. Concerning the subject of lost time, the Sages have said that it relates to the idea, "A twisted thing cannot be made straight" (Ecclesiastes 1:15). It is a loss that cannot be rectified, for a lost moment can never be retrieved. A moment that is squandered pursuing the pleasures of life can never be recovered, and it constitutes an irreversible loss. From here we learn just how serious a loss of time is, be it for a single moment. Hence the Sages have said, "If you leave me for one day, I will leave you for two." Since we have reached this point, it is fitting to expand a little on the subject.

It is written, "For it is time to act for the L-RD; they have voided Your Torah" (Psalms 119:126). Everyone should set themselves a fixed time to study Torah, a time that is off-limits to all other activities. We have no right to transgress this resolution even to the slightest degree. Unfortunately, it is precisely during such a time, one set aside for the study of Torah, that the evil inclination will try to weaken a person in his learning. Because it tries to make people violate the Torah, it is precisely during this time that a person must strengthen himself as much as possible, for this is when his inclination tries to weaken him and make him falter.

We see this in the verse, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Genesis 27:22). This means that the evil inclination will actually leave a person alone, but only if he doesn't study Torah. As soon as he begins to study it – as soon as he wants to hear the voice of Jacob – the hands of Esau will come and try to make him falter. Because the evil inclination tries to make him violate the Torah, a person must strengthen himself to the utmost in this area, and he must diligently study during the time he has fixed for himself.

In light of this explanation, we may understand a story that the Sages relate to us in the Gemara: "Rabbi Yossi the Galilean was once on a journey when he met Beruriah [the wife of Rabbi Meir]. He asked her, 'By what road do we go to Lod?' She replied, 'Foolish Galilean, did the Sages not say: "Engage not in much talk with women" [Perkei Avoth 1:5]?

You should have asked, "Which [way] to Lod"?' (Eruvin 53b). This is difficult to understand, for didn't Rabbi Yossi know that it was forbidden to speak excessively with women, such that a woman had to teach him this? Furthermore, is it really forbidden to ask a woman what road one should take in order to reach a certain destination? We may explain this by the verse, "You shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road" (Deuteronomy 6:7), which tells us that we should be studying Torah without interruption even while on a journey. Thus Rabbi Yossi the Galilean was certainly studying Torah on his journey, which is precisely why the question is raised: Why did he interrupt his study to ask a woman a question? Furthermore, why did he use so many words in asking his question?

This was the criticism that Beruriah made to him, namely: If you are studying Torah on your journey, why are you speaking more than you should with a woman? You should have asked as briefly as possible. Furthermore, you are transgressing the prohibition against speaking at length with a woman. This is why she reprimanded him, saying that each moment he interrupted his Torah study was inexcusable. He also put himself in danger by speaking excessively with a woman.

From here we see the power of the evil inclination. When a person, be it the greatest of his generation, permits himself to interrupt his Torah study in order to earn a living – even to know what road he is on so as not to get lost – the evil inclination will try to make him waste the time he has set aside for learning. This happens without a person realizing it, for he will think that he has simply asked a question. He has no idea that it is the Satan's doing.

This is what the Sages said concerning the verse, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." When the voice of Jacob echoes in synagogues and houses of study, Esau's hands are powerless (Bereshith Rabba 65:20). In other words, it is only when we hear the sounds of Torah that Esau becomes powerless. Yet if the sounds of Torah are not heard in yeshivot, then the hands of Esau will dominate the Jewish people, seeking to wipe them out from under the heavens. It is for this reason that the Gentile descendants of Amalek continually try to wipe out the Jewish people when they abandon Torah, which is what happened during the time of Haman.

From here we see just how grave the sin of neglecting Torah study is. When that happens, a person attracts the forces of evil to himself and his troubles increase. This is the loss we have spoken of, and it is here that he must be encouraged. He must strengthen himself as much as possible in Torah study; he cannot neglect it. At the same time, he must study in purity. This idea is alluded to this week in Shabbat Parah, which deals with the purity of the Children of Israel. In fact we must study Torah in purity and not waste the time that has been set aside for this purpose. By doing so, we will experience an abundance of blessing and success in this world and in the World to Come.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

We're Going Back Home!

It is written, "Aaron and his sons did all the things that the L-RD commanded by the hand of Moses" (Leviticus 8:36).

Rashi gives the reason for this verse: "To tell their praise, namely that they did not deviate to the right or to the left."

Final arrangements had been made for Rabbi Shalom Schwadron's trip, for his bags were packed and a taxi had been called. On the way to the airport, with his ticket in hand, Rabbi Shalom stopped by the home of his Rav, the gaon Rabbi Leib Chasman Zatzal (the author of Ohr Yahel), to receive his blessing. He approached his Rav with reverence and respect, and after having told him of his trip, he asked for a blessing. However not only did Rav Leib Chasman not give him a blessing, he hinted that he should not even go.

When Rabbi Shalom left his Rav's home, he said to his wife and relatives, "We're going back home!" Nothing could convince him to change his mind, not even when someone said that his Rav had not explicitly prohibited him from going. Nevertheless, Rabbi Shalom had firmly made up his mind, explaining his decision as follows: "When we go to a Rav to ask a question or seek advice, we shouldn't try to interpret his words. We must listen to what he says, not to what we want to hear. Furthermore, I have no intention of leaving without his blessing."

This is why our verse praises Aaron and his sons, for they did not deviate either to the right or to the left from the words of the Holy One, blessed be He. A person can only reach this level through constant and diligent work, infusing himself with the realization that no man, regardless of his stature, has any say over the Torah and its mitzvot.

We are not the masters of the Torah, and there is no possibility whatsoever of compromises when it comes to Shabbat or any other mitzvah. We must fulfill all of Hashem's mitzvot in the way they were given on Sinai.

An example may help us to understand: Imagine a doctor telling a patient that if he values his life, he will stop smoking right away. When the man returns home, however, he picks up a pack of cigarettes. His doctor's warning then comes to mind, and he hesitates. On one hand he has a tremendous desire to smoke, but on the other he knows that he is putting his life in danger. Finally, after having given it much thought, he decides that one cigarette can't hurt. After all, will one kill him? The only problem is that one cigarette leads to a second, which leads to a third, until finally he has smoked his usual number of cigarettes.

This person should have asked himself, "If I smoke this one cigarette, will I be able to stop?" Yet once he began compromising, his resolution to not smoke wavered. Likewise, a person who begins to make compromises in terms of mitzvot cannot be described as one who "did not deviate to the right or to the left."

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, "This is the law of the burnt-offering. The burnt-offering shall be upon the hearth, upon the altar, all night" (Leviticus 6:2).

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why the word *mokda* ("hearth") is written with a small *mem*.

This seems to be teaching us that the principle behind Torah study is humility and self-annulment (to make oneself small), as our Sages have said on numerous occasions (e.g. *Nedarim* 55a). The Torah is acquired precisely by humility, as was the case with Moses. Although he ascended to Heaven, he still remained the humblest of all men (*Numbers* 12:3), and although he reigned over Israel for 40 years, he remained modest and retained his Torah. It is this kind of humility that enables us to grow spiritually.

We may also say that here the Torah is speaking of offerings that are fit for consumption, as well as forbidden foods. In Parsha Vayikra it is written that we cannot eat certain kinds of fat or blood, for blood alludes to desire and pride (*Zohar*), whereas kosher food alludes to humility. Kosher food also alludes to the rectification of sins committed against the covenant of circumcision, and by eating kosher food a person is influenced for the better. With regards to a pregnant woman, what she eats also has an effect on her fetus. We find all this mentioned in the Gemara. When a pregnant woman consumes non-kosher food, we should not be surprised to discover that her child grows up and denies everything, for what she ate has an influence on her offspring. The fetus is nourished from the food that the mother eats, and when it comes into the world it is still nourished through her. This is the meaning of, "The burnt-offering shall be upon the hearth," for eating kosher food alludes to humility (the small *mem*), and through humility a person can elevate himself, the Hebrew term for "elevate" being closely related to the word *olah* ("burnt-offering").

What is a Chisaron Kis?

It is written, "Command Aaron...saying: 'This is the law of the burnt-offering'" (Leviticus 6:2).

Rashi states, "The term *tzav* [command] always denotes urging.... Rabbi Simeon taught: 'Scripture especially needs to urge when *chisaron kis* [literally "a loss of pocket"] is involved.'"

All the body's parts have a pocket to protect them. For example, the mouth has lips to protect it from speaking forbidden words, the ear has a lobe that can be pushed inside to prevent us from hearing improper things, and the eye has an eyelid to protect us from seeing indecent things. On the other hand, the mind has no "pocket" to cover it. It is free, constantly working and exerting an influence over us. We are therefore urged to constantly protect the mind from harmful thoughts.

Since the burnt-offerings effect atonement for harmful thoughts, the Torah uses the term *tzav*, which implies urging. A person is urged in cases where a financial loss is involved (*chisaron kis*), an allusion to the mind, which lacks a "pocket" to protect it.

– Ma'ayana Shel Torah

When Bringing an Offering

It is written, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying: 'This is the law of the burnt-offering. The burnt-offering shall be upon the hearth, upon the altar'" (Leviticus 6:2).

We know what the Ramban states regarding offerings: "All these acts are performed in order that when they are done, a person should realize that he has sinned against his G-d with his body and his soul, and that his blood should really be spilled and his body burned, were it not for the lovingkindness of the Creator" (Ramban on Leviticus 1:9). This awakens thoughts of repentance in a person, causing him to regret his misdeeds.

This is what Hashem is saying here: "Command Aaron and his sons, saying" – that they should tell every Jew who brings an offering, "this is the *torat* [law] of the burnt-offering" – the Torah's aim and the lesson to learn from the offering is that a person must make himself, the offerer, into a burnt-offering. He must become a burnt-offering and put some heartfelt thought into realizing that everything done to the offering should really have been done to him. "The burnt-offering shall be upon the hearth, upon the altar" – the fire of the altar should really consume the body of the offerer, but Hashem had mercy on this person and accepted his offering in its place.

If a person realizes this and improves his ways, Hashem will accept his offering.

– HaDrash VeHaYun

Fearing Hashem and Walking in His Ways

It is written, “A continual fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out” (Leviticus 6:6).

The Sages say, “It shall not even go out when journeying” (Yerushalmi, Yoma 4:6).

When a person is not traveling and everything is going well in his life in terms of family and friends, he is less likely to stray from the right path. A normal family life and the constant potential for criticism from a person’s family and friends will also prevent him from doing inappropriate things. However the story changes when a person is on a journey, traveling to places where no one knows him and where he fears the criticism of no one. Furthermore, various trials beset him during his travels, when it becomes very easy for him to stray and be led into sin. This is why the verse states, “Happy is everyone who fears the L-RD, who walks in His ways” (Psalms 128:1). Happy is the man who continues to fear G-d, even when he is traveling abroad. If he remains firm in his religious faith even then, this means that he truly fears G-d.

Hence the Torah says by allusion: “A continual fire shall be kept burning on the altar” – a burning love and fear of Hashem must be kept alive upon the altar of the human heart. It is never to be extinguished, not while traveling, and not during the trials of the road.

For a Jew who is passionate about Hashem at home, the evil inclination will not overcome him when he finds himself traveling abroad.

– HaDrash VeHaIyun

The Thank-Offering

It is written, “If he shall offer it for a thank-offering...” (Leviticus 7:12).

The Sages have said, “All offerings will be abolished in time to come, but the thank-offering will never be abolished” (Vayikra Rabba 27:12). A person who has never sinned in his life, not even by accident, does not have to bring an offering to Hashem, and thus for him all the offerings have been abolished. Nevertheless he must bring a thank-offering to Hashem for having protected him from sin.

– Ma’ayana Shel Torah

Overview of the Parsha

Like Parsha Vayikra before it, Parsha Tzav deals with the subject of offerings. Yet contrary to Parsha Vayikra, which deals primarily with the offerings themselves, Parsha Tzav examines the details pertaining to the sanctity of the offerings. It also mentions the offerings made during the period leading up to the sanctification of the Sanctuary and the altar, which preceded their inauguration on the eighth day. The parsha begins with the law of the burnt-offering and the perpetual flame upon the altar, known as the altar of burnt-offerings, where continual burnt-offerings and meal-offerings were brought, especially those of the priests. The parsha continues with the most holy offerings, the laws concerning the sin-offering and the sanctity of everything that touches it, as well as the details pertaining to the guilt-offering. The parsha then deals with the parts of the most holy offerings that are given to the one who brings it, namely the officiating priest. Next come the laws pertaining to the peace and thank-offerings, which have a lesser degree of holiness and may be eaten by those who offer it. They are warned not to leave anything that will become impure, nor to eat blood or fat. They must also give the breast and thigh portions to the priests. The inauguration of the priests in their role as sanctifiers takes place during the seven days of inauguration.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Acting on Enthusiasm

It is written, “Command Aaron and his sons” (Leviticus 6:2).

Rashi states, “The term tzav [command] always denotes urging for the present and also for future generations.”

Living in a tiny village during the time of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin was a talmid chacham who was fully versed in the entire Gemara. He quickly answered any question put to him, along with proofs from the Gemara to support his views.

People admired the scope of his Torah knowledge as well as his sharp mind. One time as he was eating, he was asked a question that, as usual, he quickly answered. It was then pointed out to him that there was an explicit Tosaphot that completely refuted his answer. When he thought about it, he realized that he was wrong, meaning that he had forgotten something he had learned. Surprised by this, he quickly realized that the angel of forgetfulness had begun to control him. He immediately arose from the table and left, without even reciting Birkat Hamazon. He sought refuge in a distant village, where he shut himself off from the world for the next seven years and reviewed everything he had ever studied. People asked Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin if this Jew had acted properly. After all, did he have to leave the table before reciting Birkat Hamazon? Was this in accordance with Halachah?

Rabbi Chaim replied, “No, it did not comply with Halachah, for it is forbidden to leave a meal without first reciting Birkat Hamazon. However if he had waited until after reciting the blessing, his enthusiasm would have diminished by then, and he would have been unable to follow through on his decision to review all his learning.”

Such is the lesson of this week’s parsha, the lesson of acting on enthusiasm. The word tzav implies enthusiasm, which is not simply a tool that enables us to fulfill our deeds quickly and fully, but also a goal and mitzvah in and of itself. When a good idea comes to mind, an idea that will allow a person to grow spiritually and climb the rungs of Torah, he must seize the moment and not let it go. He must fulfill his resolution with enthusiasm and not allow it to diminish.

When someone infuses himself with the quality of enthusiasm, any difficulties that he encounters in terms of laziness – in finding the right place and time to fulfill the Creator’s will – will automatically disappear. Enthusiasm is the true expression of a person’s desire to carry out the Creator’s will, proof that his entire body and soul yearns for Hashem. Thus whenever Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, entered the Beit Midrash, he did so with fervor, for all his learning was characterized by enthusiasm for the mitzvah.

On the other hand, a person who delays in taking action permanently buries his own potential. He chokes off his abilities and prevents them from surfacing. Such a person may be filled with talents that can make him reach the greatest heights, but he will lose everything on account of his laziness.

A TRUE STORY

Accept Good

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

The Ba'al HaTurim writes, “This means that whoever studies the laws of the burnt-offering, it is as if he brought a burnt-offering.”

In his eulogy for Rebbetzin Zilberstein, the gaon Rabbi Messod ben Shimon said, “I went to see my teacher Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerback Zatzal, and in his great humility he suddenly asked me if I was willing to go with him and comfort someone in mourning. Naturally I agreed, and on our way my teacher cited the Chida in explaining the verse, ‘May You forgive all iniquity and accept good, and let our lips substitute for bulls’ [Hosea 14:3]. He said: ‘May You forgive all iniquity’ – the Jewish people ask Hashem to forgive their sins; ‘accept good’ – take death from us, as it is written: ‘It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting’ [Ecclesiastes 7:2]. And if you ask what we shall do regarding the laws of mourning of the Shulchan Aruch and all the Poskim, the answer is given by the remainder of the verse: ‘Let our lips substitute for bulls.’ That is, we will fulfill our obligation by studying Halachah, and that will be enough.”

– Tuvcha Yabiu

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld – The Rosh Av Beit Din of Jerusalem

The great gaon Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld Zatzal was born in Slovakia in the year 5609 to the gaon Rabbi Avraham Shlomo. Losing his father at the age of four, he was raised by his relatives, who taught him Hashem’s Torah. Already by the age of eight he was noticed for his exceptional abilities, and therefore he was sent to study in the yeshiva of the gaon Rabbi Tzvi Manheim. His yearning for Torah was so great that by the age of 13 his Rav addressed him as moreinu (“our teacher”). He then went to perfect himself in Torah with the gaon Rabbi Avraham Binyamin Sofer, the Av Beit Din of Pressburg and author of Ketav Sofer, who loved him immensely. Rabbi Yosef Chaim lived in Kobersdorf for a few years in order to study with the gaon Rabbi Avraham Shaag. When the latter went to live in Eretz Israel, his disciple Rabbi Yosef Chaim went with him.

When Rabbi Yosef Chaim arrived in Jerusalem, everyone could see that he had been born for greatness. He was appointed as the Av Beit Din of the Edah HaCharedit in Jerusalem, where he dealt with the needs of the community. He traveled throughout the country in order to get better acquainted with the people and to help them. In Jerusalem he firmly opposed the authorities by defending the rights of Orthodox Jews. He helped build entire neighborhoods in Jerusalem, including Batei Hungarin, Beit Israel, and especially Mea Shearim.

In his will, Rabbi Yosef Chaim asked that no eulogies be said at this funeral. Instead, the only thing to be said was, “We mourn the passing of an elderly Jew from Eretz Israel.” On 19 Adar Beit, 5692, his soul ascended to Heaven and his body was laid to rest on the Mount of Olives, where it will remain until the coming of Mashiach. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Taking a Tenth

A wealthy man had a field that produced 1,000 measures of wheat every year. From it he subtracted the ma’asser (tithe) according to the law: 100 measures of wheat. When he grew old, he summoned his son and said to him, “Listen to me, my son. My days are numbered, and I am leaving you my field. It’s an excellent plot of land, capable of producing 1,000 measures of wheat each year. I always took the ma’asser, as the Torah commands, and all your endeavors will be blessed if you do the same.” The son obeyed his father, and that year his newly acquired field produced 1,000 measures of wheat, from which he subtracted 100 measures for the ma’asser. The next year, his field again produced 1,000 measures of wheat, as it normally did, but this time the man thought to himself, “Why should I take such a large ma’asser? I want to enlarge my house this year, so it will be enough if I tithe 90 measures.” The following year, however, his field produced only 900 measures of wheat.

The man told himself that it was a coincidence, and so he again tithed less than he should. The result was that his field continued to produce less and less wheat, until it finally produced only 100 measures instead of 1,000. The man was dejected because he lived quite well a few years earlier, but now he barely had enough to eat. As he sat down in his home depressed, he heard something coming from outside. He looked out the window and saw his relatives dressed in white, wearing clothes usually worn on the holidays. Surprised by this, he asked them: “Are you here to rejoice in my misery?” His relatives replied, “We heard what you’ve been doing for the last few years, and what’s become of you. We didn’t come here to rejoice in your misery, but only to point out that before, when you were taking the right amount for the ma’asser, you were the master of your own home, and Hashem was like a Kohen who received your tenth. Yet Hashem is the master now, and you’re the one to whom He is giving His tenth: 100 measures of wheat out of 1,000!

– Tanhuma, Re’eh

EISHET CHAYIL

The Golden Key

The gaon Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky was the Rav of London, and his wife the Rebbetzin accompanied him to various events. She did not purchase many new clothes, for she said that for the price of a new dress, one could almost publish an extra volume of Chazon Yechezkel.

The only time that the Rebbetzin was invited to an event as a public figure was for the inauguration of an orthodox school in Manchester, when she was offered a golden key to commemorate the event. After Rabbi Abramsky and his wife moved to Israel, a great Rosh Yeshiva and talmid chacham paid them a visit, for he had a problem to discuss with Rabbi Abramsky. The Rosh Yeshiva explained that the man who had donated the building for his yeshiva had died, and his widow wanted to come to the yeshiva’s inauguration. The problem was that the Rosh Yeshiva didn’t know how to honor her. The Rebbetzin came to the Rosh Yeshiva’s aid by offering him the golden key she had received, advising him to let his daughter give it to the widow in an impressive ceremony. About two weeks later, the Rosh Yeshiva returned to Rav Abramsky’s home and said that the widow had sent him a photograph in which the key can be seen attached to her dress like a broche. Along with the photograph, the widow had enclosed a check for a sizeable donation!