

The Path To Follow

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Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

To Whom Does Hashem Give Wisdom?

It is written, “From Moses’ presence they took the entire offering that the Children of Israel had brought for the work for the labor of the sanctuary, to do it. But they continued to bring him free offerings every morning” (Exodus 36:3).

This verse states that the Children of Israel brought their offerings for the Sanctuary every day, not because they could not bring it all at once, but because each day they grew in holiness. Because the entire offering of the previous day seemed insignificant to them, they brought new things to Moses every day, and they had to be stopped.

In truth the Sages have said, “The words of the Torah should not seem in your eyes like an ancient order of the king, which a man does not appreciate, but like something new towards which everyone runs” (Sifrei, Va’etchanan 6:8). This is why everyone must view their service of the previous day as being far from sufficient. If a person cannot renew his service of Hashem every day, he is liable to fall into the trap of performing mitzvot and studying Torah out of habit, meaning that they will not seem new in his eyes.

Always New

Why does the above verse mention the morning only? We may explain this according to the words of the Arizal (Shaar HaKavanot, Drushei Birkat HaShachar), for whom the expression, “Who renews each day the work of Creation” demonstrates that the Holy One, blessed be He, renews the strength of man every morning. Thus it is written, “They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23). Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, renews Creation every morning for man, a person must renew his strength in order to serve Hashem so that his service of today is unlike his service of yesterday. Hence the Children of Israel renewed their strength every morning, just as G-d renewed their strength every morning, so that their service of yesterday would seem insignificant to them.

Whoever Adds, More is Added to Him

The Baal Shem Tov Zatzal told his disciples, “Why do the talmidei chachamim not succeed in their learning? It is because they do not pay attention, as soon as they get up in the morning, to their duty of serving G-d throughout the day” (see the testament of the Rivash 2:20). In fact a person’s mind is free in the morning, and if he reflects upon the fact that he is getting up to serve G-d, his service will bear fruit. This is why the Children of Israel brought more offerings every morning, for their service of the day before seemed like nothing to them. It was as if they had done nothing, and so every morning they put an effort into renewing their service of that day.

Each day a person must add to his service of G-d, renewing his strength by adding to his service of the previous day. The Sages have promised, “He who increases will have his life prolonged” (Taanith

31a). Yet for a person who does not add anything – a person who is content with saying, “It’s enough that I served my Creator yesterday, so why should I add even more today?” – the Holy One, blessed be He, will not renew his strength. In the Gemara we learn, “See how the character of the Holy One, blessed be He, differs from that of flesh and blood. A mortal can put something into an empty vessel, but not into a full one. However the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. He puts more into a full vessel, but not into an empty one, for it says: ‘If hearken you will hearken’ [Exodus 15:26]. This implies: If you hearken [once], you will go on hearkening; if not, you will not hearken. Another explanation: If you hearken to the old, you will hearken to the new. Yet if your heart turns away, you will no longer hearken” (Berachot 40a).

Good Refers Only to Torah

We learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, only adds to a person who has added to himself. Thus we read, “The Holy One, blessed be He, gives wisdom only to one who already has wisdom” (Berachot 55a). When a person adds, the Holy One, blessed be He, adds as well, and if a person’s heart is filled with wisdom and cannot receive any more, what does the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He enlarges that person’s heart in order for him to receive even more wisdom, as King David said: “I will walk in broad pathways” (Psalms 119:45). Our Sages have taught, “Whoever occupies himself with the [study of] Torah for its own sake merits many things...he becomes like a fountain flowing with ever-increasing strength and like a never-ceasing stream” (Pirkei Avoth 6:1). There is no greater love of Heaven in Torah study than to constantly add to one’s service of the previous day. As the Sages say, “Anyone who occupies himself with the study of Torah becomes elevated” (ibid. 6:2).

Even King David said, “Taste and see that the L-RD is good” (Psalms 34:9). Now good refers only to Torah (Berachot 5a), and the Torah’s words are flavorful. That is, just as a person tastes something good and wants more of it, so too for words of Torah. Just as he tastes and learns them, his soul yearns for Torah even more.

Elsewhere King David compares the study of Torah to a meal, saying: “Your Torah is in my innards” (Psalms 40:9). Just as a person’s innards – as long as he fills them with food and drink – grow larger and want more, the same applies to words of Torah. As long as a person tastes and enjoys them, he wants more, until the Holy One, blessed be He, increases his ability to receive them. In this way he can gather even more words of Torah, becoming like a vessel that is filled to the point of no longer having any place to receive things. The Holy One, blessed be He, then enlarges the heart of man and his ability to absorb the Torah’s words.

Concerning the Parsha

There Must be No Poverty in a Place of Wealth

It is written, “The work was sufficient for them for all the work, to do it and to leave over” (Exodus 36:7).

With regards to the Sanctuary and the Temple, we find many issues that depend upon the general principle: “There must be no poverty in a place of wealth.” This means that in the Sanctuary and the Temple, everything done by the priests and others in dealing with sanctified matters was done through wealthy and noble means. Due to the honor of the Sanctuary and the Temple, nothing in this regard was done sparingly. The Gemara examines the source of why it is forbidden to build anything on Shabbat, even something small. Abaye said, “A poor man makes the feet of a small stove to place a pot upon it. Likewise in connection with the Sanctuary, those who boiled the dyes for dyeing the curtains – when their [dyes] were insufficient – made the feet of a small stove to place a small kettle upon it” (Shabbat 102b). Rashi explains that if some dye had not set properly, and the process had to be restarted for a small amount of wool, then in order to save on the amount of work, only a tiny amount of dye was reheated and feet were made for a small stove so as to place a pot on it. The Gemara goes on to cite Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov as saying, “There must be no poverty in a place of wealth” (Shabbat *ibid.*). Here Rashi explains: “Nothing was made sparingly; everything was done from the outset with enough and more.”

Before an animal was sacrificed for the daily burnt offering, the priests would give it to drink in order to facilitate its dismembering. Hence this water was brought in a gold cup, for “there must be no poverty in a place of wealth.”

The Gemara also states that in the Temple, the tables for the showbread were made of marble, not of silver or gold (Tamid 31b). The Gemara objects: “There must be no poverty in a place of wealth. Why then were the tables made of marble? They should have been made of silver or even of gold!”

The Gemara replies by saying that according to the principle, “There must be no poverty in a place of wealth,” the tables should have been made of silver or gold. However metal tends to heat the things that are placed on it, and therefore metal tables would have heated the bread and caused it to putrefy, which would have dishonored the Temple. Hence the tables for the showbread were not made of silver or gold.

The principle according to which there must be no poverty in a place of wealth only applies in general, but does not invalidate things after the fact. Hence there is a law which states that if a priest collected the blood of an offering in a vessel that had broken and was repaired, it does not invalidate the offering. In general, it is even permitted to temporarily repair a vessel that has broken if no other vessel is available (see *Iriot Shlomo* on the laws concerning the Temple vessels).

In fact the principle that “there must be no poverty in a place of wealth” seems to contradict the words of our Sages, for they have said: “The Torah has consideration for the money of Israel.” This

latter principle is why the Sanctuary’s urn (in which lots were placed on Yom Kippur) was made of wood, as well as why the showbread was made entirely of wheat, as opposed to the other offerings, which were made from semolina. There are other situations in which costs were reduced due to the principle that the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel.

The Tiferet Israel (Tamid 27a) wrote that the governing principle in any given situation – whether to be generous or to save – depends on the Sages of Israel. The gaon Rabbi Eliezer Flekles Zatzal, in his book of responsa entitled *Teshuvah MeAhava*, performs an in-depth analysis of issues that seem to contradict one another, as well as how the Sages decide one way or the other. He defers to his teacher, the gaon Rabbi Yechezkel Landau Zatzal, known as the *Noda B’Yehuda*.

The *Noda B’Yehuda* first marvels at the scholarship of his student, and then proceeds to establish a basic principle: Regarding everything that must be contained in a sacred vessel, we apply the principle “there must be no poverty in a place of wealth.” A supplementary principle is that the use of silver cannot be considered as “poverty.” Hence even with regards to the vessels of the Sanctuary, we say “the Torah has consideration for the money of Israel,” and so whenever Scripture does not require us to make them of gold, we make them of silver. This is why the Rambam rules that the priestly garments were not washed when they become dirty, and yet the urn (for the lots on Yom Kippur) was made of wood, for the Torah protects the money of the Children of Israel. In fact the urn is not a sacred object, and there is no reason to apply the principle “there must be no poverty in a place of wealth” to it.

This also explains why wheat was purchased for the making of the showbread. When we purchase wheat, it has no intrinsic sanctity, only the sanctity of its financial value. When this wheat becomes intrinsically sanctified, it has already become semolina. The same applies to the trumpets used for the service in the Sanctuary, for they were made of silver, not gold. This is because silver is not classified as “poverty,” besides the fact that the trumpets were not “a vessel for the service of the Sanctuary.” On the other hand, the vessels used in the service of the Sanctuary – those which are explicitly mentioned – must not be repaired when they break, for in their regard the principle that “there must be no poverty in a place of wealth” applies.

Guard Your Tongue!

As Grave as Them All

Our Sages have said that a man is punished in this world and has no portion in the World to Come for three sins: For idolatry, for immorality, and for murder, and *Lashon Harah* is as grave as them all. The Sages brought proof from Scripture for this statement, and the *Rishonim* explained it to mean that people who constantly sin in regards to *Lashon Harah* make no effort to stop themselves, for it has become something that is permitted in their eyes.

A Two-Fold Principle

It is written, “On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you” (Exodus 35:2).

With regards to a man who devotes himself to learning Torah on Shabbat – and who worries during the rest of the week because he does not have enough time to study Torah, awaiting Shabbat for this very reason – the book *Sha’arei HaKodesh* cites numerous sacred works in stating that such a man not only sanctifies Shabbat and receives an enormous reward for it, he also elevates all the days of the week in holiness and is rewarded as if he had studied during the entire week.

This is the direct meaning of the Midrash’s statement: “If a person wants to perform a mitzvah, but cannot, Scripture considers him to have performed it.” The same applies in the opposite sense: If a person has time to study (for example on Shabbat), but does not take advantage of this time to study Torah, then not only is he punished for this lost opportunity, he is also punished for the times that he did not study, since he failed to study even when he had time!

Motivated to Give

It is written, “Everyone whose spirit motivated him brought” (Exodus 35:21).

In general, something changes between the time a person feels a motivation to give and the time that he actually has to give. At first, because of the impression that people have when their hearts are touched, they become enthusiastic and decide to give generously. Yet afterwards, when initial impressions have passed and it comes time to reach into their pocket, many people lose their enthusiasm and try to fulfill their duties by giving a small amount. They may even regret their initial enthusiasm and give nothing at all.

This is why the Torah praises the Children of Israel in this verse. They did not act in the aforementioned way when it came to the Sanctuary: Of the 600,000 Jewish men, there was not a single person who gave less than what he had initially decided upon in his heart when hearing Moses’ words. No man regretted his decision, and whoever had been moved by a feeling of generosity brought accordingly.

Working to Fulfill Mitzvot

It is written, “Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands” (Exodus 35:25).

What difference did it make if the women spun with their own hands or not?

Some have answered this question by citing the words of the Tzeida LaDerech, words that are relevant to this subject:

“There are people who purchase a garment that is ready to wear, and they give it to tzeddakah. Other people know the tremendous reward for this mitzvah, and they put an effort into making such a garment with their own hands. For this, they will receive a great reward.”

This is the meaning of the verse, “Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands” – the wise women, who understood the reward of the mitzvot and the great importance of doing work to fulfill them, spun with their own hands and brought the yarn to the Sanctuary, without purchasing it already made.

Supporting Torah

It is written, “The 100 talents of silver were to cast the sockets” (Exodus 38:27).

The Sanctuary rested upon these sockets, which were cast from the 100 talents of silver that had been given by the Children of Israel for the construction of the Sanctuary. The Chafetz Chaim states that this was because the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted all the Jewish people to have a part in making the sockets upon which the Sanctuary rested.

From here the Chafetz Chaim draws a lesson concerning the study of Torah and those who support it, namely that they resemble the Sanctuary and its sockets. Both contribute to the existence of the world, and both are partners in this endeavor.

The evil inclination does all that it can, however, to turn away those who study Torah. It tries to separate them from the Torah, as well as its supporters, so they will stop supporting it. Since it sees that those who study Torah will not listen, it turns towards the ba’alei batim who support them.

It is here that the evil inclination manages to weaken those who support Torah, for they do not understand the greatness of the duty to support it.

In the Light of the Parsha

Study is Not the Main Thing

The Sages have said, “Because Moses did not work on the Sanctuary, the Holy One, blessed be He, allowed him to erect it” (Tanhuma, Pekudei 11). This is surprising, for all the work on the Sanctuary was done according to Moses’ instructions. Therefore what does it mean that he did not work on it?

From here we learn the principle, “Not study, but practice is the main thing” (Pirkei Avot 1:17). Although Moses told Betzalel and the Sages how to build the Sanctuary and make its vessels, Scripture considers him to have done nothing because he did not participate with his own hands. There was nothing left for Moses to do other than to erect the Sanctuary, which is what completed the work. Now we know that “if one begins a mitzvah but does not complete it, and another comes and completes it, it is attributed to him who completed it” (Tanhuma, Eikev 6). Since G-d wanted the building of the Sanctuary to be attributed to Moses, He let him erect it.

This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, let Moses erect it, something that neither Betzalel nor Oholiab could do, for Moses completely devoted himself to the Sanctuary. Hence it carries his name, just as it says with regards to David and the Temple: “A song for the inauguration of the Temple of David” (Psalms 30:1). Our Sages ask, “Did David build the Temple? It was Solomon who built it, as it is written: ‘Solomon built the Temple’ [I Kings 6:14]! What then is the meaning of: ‘The inauguration of the Temple of David?’ Since David was entirely devoted to its construction, it carries his name” (Mechilta, Shira 1).

The Memory of the Tzaddik is a Blessing

Rabbi Shlomo Pinto

The tzaddik and kabbalist Rabbi Shlomo Pinto Zatzal married the sister of Rabbi Khalifa ben Malka Zatzal of Tetouan, who was a very wealthy man. Both Rabbi Khalifa and Rabbi Shlomo were engaged in commerce, and everything they did succeeded in abundance. It must be underlined, however, that their great wealth did not blind them, for the teaching of Rabbi Amnon of Mayence was always in their mind: “Man comes from dust and returns to dust.” Hence they devoted their time to the study of Torah and the service of G-d.

While their employees were busy with their work, the two brothers-in-law occupied themselves with studying Torah and discussing Talmudic problems in great depth. Sometimes their learning was interrupted by employees who needed their advice for urgent matters and could not wait. Yet as soon as this was finished, the two of them returned to Torah.

During most of the day, the two brothers-in-law were together, wearing tallit and tefillin as they studied Torah. A good part of their day was devoted to Halachic discussions that dealt with the responses they had to give to people who came to them with questions.

Tremendous Humility

We see the tremendous humility of Rabbi Shlomo’s extraordinary character from the fact that he asked his brother-in-law Rabbi Khalifa not to mention his name in the Halachic responses that he sent to Jewish communities. Rabbi Shlomo did this because he saw an angel of G-d in his brother-in-law, who was too great and honorable to let his own name be added to his in regards to a Halachic decision.

They learned together even when traveling abroad, journeys that were necessary for their business, for they had ships that brought merchandise from Morocco to Spain and Portugal. At one point Rabbi Shlomo Pinto followed his brother-in-law to Agadir, where he and his family moved and settled down. Yet in Agadir, Rabbi Shlomo fell victim to a disaster, for his wife died in the prime of her life without children.

Rabbi Shlomo left Agadir for Marrakech, where he married a woman from the Benvenisti family. He then returned to Agadir, where his home became filled with light and joy, for his wife gave birth to a son. He named the boy Haim, and he would grow up to become a gaon and kabbalist, none other than the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol.

What Sins Did You Commit Today?

The tzaddik and kabbalist Rabbi Shlomo Pinto had ten sons, bachurei yeshiva who studied Torah day and night. It is said that one night, after studying in yeshiva, one of his sons returned home and hung his jacket in the front entrance.

Not long afterwards, a poor Jew who lived in the area, a man who did not have enough to feed his family, came to the Rav’s home. He proceeded to take the jacket from the front entrance, and he went and sold it. With the money that he received, he bought food to feed his family for the night.

In the middle of the night, however, it happened that this Jew was overtaken with terrible stomach pains that would not go away. None

of the remedies that he tried worked, and his wife, who saw just how greatly he was suffering, said to him: “What sins did you commit today?” He said to her, “I took the jacket of the Rav’s son and sold it to someone in order to bring you something to eat.” As soon as the first rays of dawn appeared, his wife got up and went to see the man who had purchased the stolen jacket from her husband. She gave him an item from her home in exchange for the jacket. She then went to return it to the Rav’s son.

That morning, the son of Rabbi Shlomo woke up and prepared to recite the morning prayer. He went to the front entrance, but to his great surprise he did not find his jacket. He then said to his father, “My jacket has disappeared! How can I go to synagogue and pray?” His father the tzaddik replied, “Don’t worry. The one who took your jacket will return it right away.”

He was still speaking when they heard the sound of someone knocking at the door. Upon opening the door, he saw the wife of the poor Jew, with his jacket in her hand. She then beseeched him, “The Rav knows that my husband is extremely poor, and he stole your jacket. He is now lying down at home with terrible stomach pains, close to death. I beg you, pray for his healing!” Rabbi Shlomo said to her, “Come in. Your husband has already been healed.”

True Story

No Crying Out on Shabbat

It is written, “The seventh day shall be holy to you, a Sabbath of rest” (Exodus 35:2).

An exhausted Jewish family once came to see the chacham Yehudah Asslan Zatzal with a disturbing story. Their daughter, who had many talents, suddenly lost her mind and started to act mad.

The family was very distraught, for all their efforts to get help from physicians and psychiatrists proved useless.

The chacham Yehudah Asslan told them to bring their daughter into his office. As her face contorted into various forms and strange voices emerged from her throat, the gaon addressed her and said: “Do you take it upon yourself, from now on, to observe all the laws of Shabbat?” The eyes of her parents opened wide to see if she would respond to the words of the chacham. The girl’s face took on a serious expression, and she nodded her head in agreement. Then something amazing took place that left a profound impression on everyone who witnessed it, even numerous years afterwards: The chacham Yehudah Asslan opened his sanctified mouth and murmured a supplication and request to the Creator. He prayed for Him to send the young woman a complete healing, a healing of both body and soul.

As the chacham was praying, those present noticed a significant change in the girl. By the time he had finished his prayer, she arose healthy in both body and soul.

Upon seeing this, her parents threw themselves at the feet of the chacham and expressed their profound gratitude for having saved their daughter. Yet in his great humility, the chacham did not accept their praises, warning them again that their daughter would remain in good health only by the merit of observing Shabbat.