

The Path To Follow

Vayikra

435

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Fixing Times for Learning Torah with Integrity

On the verse, “When a man [adam] among you brings an offering” (Vayikra 1:2), our Sages in the Midrash teach: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: ‘Let your offering be like the offering of Adam, who because he owned all things, offered nothing acquired by robbery or violence. Likewise you too must not offer anything acquired by robbery or violence’ ” (Vayikra Rabba 2:7).

In reality, we may ask why anyone could possibly think that a person seeking forgiveness for his sins with an offering would go and steal an animal to make that offering. After all, he is only bringing it as an atonement for his sins, so how can it be done by means of robbery?

We may explain this by first recalling what our Sages have said in the Gemara: “When man is led forth in judgment, he is asked, ‘Did you deal honestly, did you fix times for learning...?’ ” (Shabbat 31a). The *Ba’alei HaTosafot* object to this, noting that elsewhere it is written: “The beginning of man’s judgment deals with words of Torah” (Kiddushin 40b). Thus how can both statements be true at the same time? Their answer is that the first question a person is asked pertains to his honesty in business, but when he is held to account, he is first reprimanded for not having fixed times for learning.

Honestly Adhering to Times for Learning

We may explain this according to the Sages’ teaching that when a person fixes times for learning Torah, studying every day for an hour or two and going to the Beit HaMidrash to listen to a class that starts at a certain time, but he fails to arrive on time, sometimes being a little lazy and arriving late by 10 or 15 minutes, he may not think that it is serious. However he must realize that it is very serious. In fact a person who normally acts like this is considered to have stolen G-d’s time! In reality, he has set aside this time for Hashem, so how can he use it for his own affairs?

The two questions that man is asked on the day of judgment are really one. He is asked if he fixed times for learning with honesty, without having stolen any of that time, and in reality the judgment of man only regards words of Torah. If he says “Yes, I have fixed times for learning,” he will be asked: “Did you honestly respect those times, or did you steal a little time from them for your own affairs?”

This is why the verse uses the term *adam*, for the Sages have said: “You are called *adam*, but non-Jews are not called *adam*” (*Bava Metzia* 114b). In fact the nations of the world did not receive the Torah, and therefore they do not merit being called *adam*. The

Torah says to the Children of Israel, “How did you manage to be called *adam*? By bringing ‘an offering that comes from you’ – meaning by fixing times for learning Torah and by giving Me your time, without taking any of it for yourselves – for if you do that, you are profiting from robbery.”

The Torah says, “How can you be called *adam*? By learning Torah through difficulty, by having the intention of constantly offering yourselves to Me. However if you serve Me by means of robbery, meaning that you have not fixed times for learning Torah with perfection, and you have not fulfilled this *mitzvah* with integrity, then you are not worthy of being called *adam*.”

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the Children of Israel: “If you have not fixed times for learning Torah in a perfectly honest way, if you do not fulfill this *mitzvah* to perfection, then you are not worthy of being called *adam*. However if you fulfill all the *mitzvot* with uprightness and integrity, you will merit being called *adam*.” As kabbalists have noted, the term *adam* has a numerical value of 45, equal to that of the Tetragrammaton [when “filled” with three *alephs*, two *vavs*, and one *daleth*]. In fact the Holy One, blessed be He, has given each Jew a Divine spark, something that has not been given to non-Jews. This is why the Children of Israel are called *adam*, for they possess a Divine spark and the Tetragrammaton is engraved in them. However non-Jews – who do not possess a Divine spark, and in whom the Tetragrammaton is not engraved – are not called *adam*.

He Who Makes an Effort Will Eat

This explanation allows us to understand something else. Non-Jews do not fulfill *mitzvot* with complete devotion. The Gemara teaches that in the future, “The nations will plead, ‘Offer us the Torah anew and we shall obey it.’ But the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to them, ‘You foolish ones among the peoples, he who makes an effort on the eve of Shabbat will eat on Shabbat. But he who did not make an effort on the eve of Shabbat, what will he eat on Shabbat? Nevertheless, I have an easy *mitzvah* that is called *sukkah*. Go and carry it out.’ ... Each of them will then go and make a *sukkah* on the top of his roof. But the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the sun to blaze over them as during the summer solstice, and each of them will tear down his *sukkah* and leave” (*Avodah Zarah* 3a).

We therefore see that non-Jews, since they do not possess a Divine spark, immediately grow weary when a *mitzvah* is difficult to fulfill, and they forsake it. However the Jewish people are not like this: Even when *mitzvot* are difficult for them, they fulfill them to perfection and with pure intentions.

Blessed is the Man Who Trusts in G-d

Moshe was a poor Jewish tailor. During the week, he went along the streets going from house to house asking if anyone needed any needlework done. On Fridays he would return home and empty his moneybag, putting aside a tenth for *tzeddakah*. He then gave his wife the rest to see to the needs of their home.

Winter arrived, a harsh winter that brought tremendous amounts of snow and was particularly difficult. It became impossible for Moshe to consider going out, and so he was forced to stay home, without work or resources.

Meanwhile *Pesach* was approaching, but Moshe was penniless. How was he going to buy everything needed for the holidays, such as *matzah* and wine for the four glasses? His children went about barefoot and wore patched-up clothes.

Moshe could no longer stay at home. With tremendous faith in G-d, he took his toolkit and once again went through the streets, which were now filled with snow.

He had barely made it down the road when the carriage of the local Baron stopped in front of him. The Baron had just finished celebrating and was completely drunk. Not only that, but he wanted to amuse himself at the expense of "his Jew."

"Come here Moshke," he shouted to him, a hunting rifle in his hand. "We're going to have a little fun, you and I. You're going to run to the other side of that field, and I'm going to try and catch you like a bird," he said with a laugh. "I beg you, honorable Baron..." Moshe implored. "Quiet!" the Baron interrupted. "If you don't move, I'll shoot you on the spot." The poor tailor had great difficulty on his legs. He walked slowly, with his lips whispering a final confession as he thought of the fate of his wife and children.

"Now run on all fours!" the Baron thundered at him. "I'm going to shoot you!" "*Shema Israel!*" cried Moshe. An explosion ripped through the air, and Moshe remained stretched out on the ground, motionless.

The Baron's wife, sitting in the carriage next to him, had pity on the poor Jew. "It's enough that you scared him to death," she said to her husband. "Now make it up to him!"

"Come, let's go Moshke. Jump into the carriage," the Baron called to him. Moshe hadn't yet fully realized that he was still alive. Whispering a prayer of thanks to G-d for having saved him from certain death, he approached the carriage and climbed in.

The Baron was so drunk that he quickly fell asleep, and his wife began to chat with the Jew, who was sitting behind her. He answered all her questions and spoke of his family and his meager earnings. "Come home with us," she invited him. "I'll give you some work." After he worked the rest of the day at her home, she gave him his wages. At that point his eyes almost popped out of their sockets at what he saw: In a single day of working there, he had earned more than a month's wages working elsewhere! He had the impression that the wheel of fortune had turned, and at this rate he would be able to celebrate *Pesach* as he never before dreamed possible!

Several weeks before *Pesach*, Moshe once again came to the Baron's home, his heart content. However this time the Baroness was not at home, and Moshe found himself face to face with the Baron himself.

"Hello Moshke! You're still alive?" he asked him. "Yes, thank G-d," Moshe replied. "And your earnings?" the Baron continued. "Thank G-d. He gives food to all!" Moshe said. "You thank your G-d too much, Moshke," the Baron said angrily. "I've heard that it's my wife who provides you with your livelihood."

"May G-d reward her," Moshe responded.

"Again you mention G-d?" the Baron exploded. "And where will you get your money for Passover if my wife doesn't give you a salary?" "G-d will help me," Moshe innocently replied.

At that point the Baron became hysterical. "Get out of here!" he screamed. "You'll never step foot in my house again! Let G-d provide you with your earnings!" The poor tailor bolted away.

The night of searching for *chametz* arrived, and Moshe's home was immersed in grief. There was certainly no *chametz* in the house, but there wasn't any *matzah* either! A prayer escaped his lips: "Sovereign of the universe, what is going to happen?"

All of a sudden the door opened and a large, heavy bag was thrown into the room. It spread a horrible stench in the air, like that of a rotting carcass. "It's a plot against the Jews!" Moshe cried out. "There's not a moment to lose!"

His wife worked up the courage to open the bag. "Look Moshe, it's a monkey!" she exclaimed. "There's a dead monkey in the bag!" Moshe began to breathe again. The danger had passed. He took hold of the bag to throw it outside, when all of a sudden he heard the sound of metal. A coin fell from the bag – a gold coin! He hurried to open up the monkey's body, and in its stomach he found a treasure trove of gold coins!

The Seder at Moshe's home that year was fit for a king, with old wine, *shmura matzah*, and holiday dishes gracing his table. Guests were seated all around, the eyes of his children glittered, and the joy of the holiday was visible everywhere.

All of a sudden, in the middle of the Seder, the door opened wide and revealed no less than the Baron and his wife. Since the Baron had chased him from his house, he and his wife had arrived expecting to see him in a somber home that was devoid of everything.

The Baron was shocked. "Where did you get the money to have such a meal?" he asked in amazement. Moshe quickly recounted had G-d had sent him a treasure that was hidden in the stomach of a dead monkey.

At that point, the Baron was completely thrown into disarray. The monkey had been the Baron's pet, and when it suddenly died he ordered that its carcass be thrown into Moshe's house as a Passover "gift" for his Jew.

The Baron then realized what had happened: His monkey had seen him counting his gold coins and checking their quality with his teeth, and like all monkeys it imitated its owner. In doing so, it ate a large number of coins and died as a result.

"Your G-d truly helped you," the Baron acknowledged. "After the holiday, you can return and work for us," the Baron's wife added.

Guard Your Tongue!

A Mitzvah to Disparage Them

The prohibition against speaking *Lashon Harah* applies, according to Torah law, to a person within the category of *amitecha* ("your people"), meaning a person who is with you in the observance of Torah and *mitzvot*. However it is a *mitzvah* to disparage heretics and to shame them, be it in their presence or not, for everything that we see or hear about them. The Torah states, "Each of you shall not wrong his fellow" (*Vayikra* 25:17) and, "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people" (*ibid.* 19:16). However heretics are not within this category, for they do not act as "your people." We therefore follow the practice, "For indeed, I hate those who hate You, Hashem, and I quarrel with those who rise up against You" (*Tehillim* 139:21). – *Chafetz Chaim*

Except Adam

It is written, “When a man [*adam*] among you brings an offering to Hashem” (*Vayikra* 1:2).

The Zohar states, “The term *adam* [man] does not refer to Adam” (Zohar III:5a), something that is surprising. In the book *Divrei Chachamim*, Rabbi Meir Yerushalmi *Zatzal* writes that in reality, the Sages state that one who vows to bring an offering must say, “This is an offering for Hashem,” not, “For Hashem this is an offering,” lest he die and G-d’s Name be said in vain.

The Gemara states that Adam gave 70 years of his life to King David. How did Adam know how long he would live?

Since he had been told that “on the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (*Bereshith* 2:17), and since one day for Hashem is like a thousand years, Adam was not afraid of dying before this time. Hence he could give some of his years to David.

This is why Adam could say, “For Hashem this is an offering,” since he was told that he would die only “on the day that you eat of it.”

The Loftiest Name

It is written, “When a man [*adam*] among you brings an offering to Hashem” (*Vayikra* 1:2).

In the book *Tzror HaMor*, Rabbi Avraham Saba writes that man is described by four names in Hebrew: *ish*, *gever*, *adam*, and *enosh*. The loftiest of these names is *adam*, for in Ezekiel’s description of the Divine Chariot we read: “like the appearance of a man upon it” (Ezekiel 1:26). This is because *adam* has a numerical value of 45, equal to that of the Tetragrammaton [when “filled” with three *alephs*, two *vavs*, and one *daleth*].

Hence in regards to the *mitzvot* of the offerings, the verse begins with *adam*, for it is the best of these names. It alludes to the fact that when someone brings an offering in order to cleave to Hashem, by presenting his body and soul, it is desirable for this to come from a lofty man – *adam* – one who will cleave to the “Man above” and desire to come closer to Him. Hence the verse states, “When a man [*adam*] among you brings an offering to Hashem” – the one who brings an offering should be an *adam*.

Failing to Reprimand

It is written, “When a leader sins” (*Vayikra* 4:22).

The reason why the verses, “It is the sin offering of the assembly” (v.21) and “when a leader sins” are juxtaposed is explained in the Chida’s book *Nachal Kedumim*:

This hints to us that whoever has the opportunity to issue a reprimand, but fails to do so, Scripture considers him to have sinned. This is what the verse states: “It is the sin offering of the assembly” – when the community sins and a leader does not issue a reprimand, Scripture considers it as if “a leader sins,” meaning that the sin is attributed to the leader.

Twice Unintentionally

It is written, “If a person commits a trespass and sins unintentionally against the holy things of Hashem” (*Vayikra* 5:15).

We must clearly realize that trespassing against a sacred object constitutes rebellion against G-d through pride, something that is completely deliberate. Therefore how can the verse use the term “unintentionally,” since the two are opposites?

In his book *Afapei Shachar*, Rabbi Shmuel Taieb *Zatzal* (known as the “Darshan of Djerba”) states that we may explain this by means of a principle found among Ashkenazi rabbis: If someone has unintentionally sinned twice, he is considered to have sinned deliberately. The proof is found in the Gemara, which recounts that a blind man unintentionally sinned twice by not preparing an *eruv tavshilin*. Shmuel said to him, “You are a transgressor” (*Beitzah* 16b).

This allows us to understand the apparently contradictory expressions found in the verse. When someone commits an act unintentionally, he may sometimes be considered as having trespassed “against the holy things of Hashem” in such a way that an unintentional sinner becomes a deliberate sinner: At first his sin was unintentional, but since he again committed the same sin unintentionally – that is, because of this second instance – he is considered to have trespassed against something holy to Hashem.

In the Light of the Parsha

Moshe’s Humility

It is written, “And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (*Vayikra* 1:1).

Rashi explains that each time Hashem communicated with Moshe, it was always preceded by an expression of affection, the same expression employed by the ministering angels, as it is written: “One called to the other...” (Isaiah 6:3).

This requires an explanation, for at first we find affectionate language, so why does the Torah then use the term *vayedaber* (“and He spoke”), which denotes harsh language? We also need to understand why the term *leimor* (“saying”) is added once the terms *vayikra* and *vayedaber* have been used.

The Ohr HaChaim *Hakadosh* raises the following point: We need to understand why the name of the caller is not mentioned at the outset, even if it is mentioned afterwards. It would have been better to mention it at the outset, so we know that it is G-d calling him. We may explain this by saying that the letter *aleph* in the term *vayikra* contains two *yuds* and one *vav*, the sum of which equals the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton. Why is this *aleph* smaller than the other letters? It is due to the humility of Moshe Rabbeinu.

This is what the *tzaddikim* do: When they see that the Holy One, blessed be He, loves them, they make themselves small before Him, as it is said concerning Jacob: “I am too small for all the kindnesses and all the truth that You have done with Your servant” (*Bereshith* 32:11). This is why the *aleph* in *vayikra* is small: Moshe did not want to benefit from the fact that G-d loved him. In fact he feared that sin would bring about harmful consequences, and he did not ask for G-d to speak to him in an affectionate manner. This is why the *aleph* is written small, so that G-d’s Name would not be written explicitly so as to say that He called him. Thus after *vayikra*, the Torah writes *vayedaber* (implying that He spoke to him harshly), since Moshe wanted G-d to speak to him in this way, not affectionately. Now the will of man must be respected, which is why the Torah wrote *vayedaber* after *vayikra*, for such was the desire of Moshe Rabbeinu.

We have previously described in this article some of the recollections from the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach, may his memory protect us.

We shall once again mention a few of the exceptional character traits that we can learn from these accounts:

The Rosh Yeshiva

The Rosh Yeshiva described the years of his youth, saying that he had only one shirt until the day he arrived at yeshiva. There, someone was giving away a shirt, and it was Rav Shach who obtained it.

In passing, with regards to Rav Shach's shyness, we must add that he was once asked to request funds from a certain donor for a specific, necessary item. Rav Shach told the person asking him that in his youth, he had been invited to a Shabbat meal at the home of a certain family. His friend, who shared Shabbat meals with him, said: "Listen, you've been walking around with holes in your pants for a long time already. Perhaps you should ask this family to give you a pair of pants that they don't need any more?" Rabbi Elazar Menachem replied, "I don't want to. I can't ask people for things. To me, it's ten times harder to ask than to continue walking around with pants that are torn and have holes in them."

After relating this story, Rav Shach turned to his listener and said, "And you want me to ask somebody for a favor?"

He is Allowed to Stop Learning

Learning over and over again – never stopping for a single instant – is what the *gaon* Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi *Zatzal* would do. For the holy Torah, he sacrificed his entire being and all his desires, never ceasing to learn with incredible devotion in every material and spiritual situation. In his desire to encourage great devotion to learning in his students, he recounted the following story to them:

He once felt very weak and had a headache. Yet despite his pain, he did not stop learning. He continued to learn with what little strength he had left. When that left him as well, he fainted and fell from his chair. When his family heard the sound of him falling, they rushed to his room and helped him regain consciousness. He was then placed on a bed, and they found that he was burning with fever. When they checked his temperature, it was 40°C! He was treated and given some medication, and he eventually recovered. Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi ended his account by saying that if someone has reached such a state, he is permitted to stop learning.

The Rambam Sees No Difference

In the year 5730, when the *gaon* Rabbi Nachum Pertzovitz *Zatzal* was struck by a grave illness, his relatives did not immediately learn of it. Even his closest study partner knew nothing for a long time. No change could be seen in him, and not a word of suffering or complaint escaped his lips in regards to the grave illness that struck him at so young an age. It was only when people saw that he had difficulty walking that they learned of his illness, his study partner included.

At the time, Rabbi Nachum had to give classes in the yeshiva regarding subjects that he had never lectured on. He gave these classes normally, with the same enthusiasm as usual, and with no snags whatsoever.

Rabbi Nachum had to be hospitalized, and those who visited him found him immersed in the difficulties of tractate *Yoma*. "My grandfather," explained Rav Nachum, "the *gaon* Rabbi Shlomo Cohen of Vilna, declared that he knew the service of the High Priest by heart, and that if *Mashiach* arrived, he could immediately go and serve in the Temple. Should I not do the same? Perhaps you will say that I am sick? Certainly not! The Rambam rules that every Jew must study Torah, even if he is suffering. If you say that a person is allowed to occupy himself with easier tasks when he is ill, the Rambam draws no distinction in this regard, meaning that the obligation that is incumbent on 'every Jew' is also an obligation that is incumbent on one who suffers."

Hand Me Tractate *Zevachim*

The Rebbe of Novominsk, Rabbi Nachum Mordechai Perlow *Zatzal*, had all kinds of volumes of the Gemara placed in a box. He never made a mistake in finding an exact reference in the Gemara, and his fingers would rapidly leaf through the pages to rest on the precise *Tosafot*. With great speed he could cite by heart three, four, or even five explanations of the *Ba'alei HaTosafot* regarding the issue at hand.

The margins of his Gemara were filled with handwritten notes. Nevertheless, each time that he studied, he would approach the subject from a fresh perspective, free of any previous conclusions. In fact he would joyfully and enthusiastically recite each word and line as he studied.

One of his relatives recounted the following story: "We were immersed in our usual study of the Gemara, and the Rebbe mentioned something said by a commentator. He got up and quickly climbed a ladder, wanting to bring us the book where the points he referred to were explained. As he was coming down, he missed a rung and fell on a wooden box located beneath the ladder. His legs were seriously injured, and a painful groan escaped his lips.

"As we approached him, trying to help him get up, he raised his hand as if to refuse: 'I beg you...call a doctor...but let me be.' One student ran to get a doctor, and the Rebbe spoke to me in a whisper: 'Benish! Hand me tractate *Zevachim*.' At the time, this was the tractate being studied for *Daf HaYomi*."

"The doctor arrived a few minutes later, and he found the Rebbe on the floor, just as before, but with a Gemara in his hands. He was holding it above his head, like a canopy, and learning it as part of *Daf HaYomi*!"

Asking for the Explanation

In the eulogy given by the *gaon* Rabbi Baruch Shimon Solomon *Shlita* for the *gaon* Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum *Zatzal* (the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir in the United States), he recounted that when the deceased was sitting *shivah* following the death of his own son, Rabbi Aryeh Leib *Zatzal* (a *gaon* and *tzaddik* in his own right), whom he was extremely close to, during the entire *shivah* all he thought about was how such a thing could have happened.

Yet once the *shivah* was over, the first thing Rabbi Shmuel did was to ask for an explanation on a gemara! That was his consolation and the essence of his life, since his love for Torah was without limit!