

works day and night to carry out acts of kindness. He, too, has his limitations. When Hashem takes pity upon a person, His pity is endless. When He performs *chesed* for people, it is limitless. When we thank Hashem (in *Tefillas Modim*, and essentially whenever), we should keep in mind that the characteristics of His compassion and acts of kindness are extraordinary in the sense that they are unbounded, incessant and perpetual. This is why our gratitude to Him must, likewise, be constant and continuous.

**יעש אהרן ובניו את כל הדברים אשר צוה ד' ביד משה
Aharon and his sons carried out all the matters that
Hashem had commanded through Moshe. (8:36)**

Rashi explains that the Torah is recording their praise in that they swerved neither to the right nor to the left. They followed the straight course as dictated to them by Moshe *Rabbeinu*. They had much to do, many *mitzvos* with a multitude of details. Nonetheless, whatever Moshe instructed them, they did. The *Sifra* adds that, despite their being commanded by a contemporary, they executed the commandments as if Hashem Himself had spoken to them. While we would expect Aharon and certainly his sons to perform the service, the inherent joy they manifested was to their credit, for it showed supreme selflessness. Others might have had feelings of resentment – not Aharon *HaKohen*, an individual who, despite being older than Moshe, deferred to him in every way.

The *Chida*, *zl*, focuses on the words *Lo hitu yamin u'se'mol*, "They did not veer to the right or to the left." He explains that, at the onset of the *Shivas Yimei Milluim*, seven days of Inauguration (of the *Mishkan*), Aharon *HaKohen* and his sons were all dressed in their *Bigdei Kehunah*, Priestly vestments, in preparation for the big moment when they would commence the *avodah*, service. They were anointed with the *shemen hamishchah*, anointing oil. The excitement and awe of what they were about to do was obviously overwhelming. Then, at the last moment, they were notified that it was not happening; they were not performing the *avodah* – just yet. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was the only one who performed the *avodah* all seven days. Despite the fact that they were not included in this (commencement) service, they had not been told to leave. They were in a holding pattern. They sat on the "bench", waiting obediently, prepared for the moment when they would be called up.

This is what *Rashi* teaches us when he says that they veered neither to the right nor to the left. They did not turn to the "right," toward the *Mishkan* to perform the *avodah* for which they had anxiously been waiting; nor did they turn to the "left," toward the outside of the *Mishkan* – leaving and returning home. They sat patiently, obediently, respectfully, as commanded. They restrained their emotions and waited. This is why they were praised.

When things do not go as we had planned, do we just sit there respectfully – or do we complain and leave? Aharon taught us to follow the command. Hashem said to don the *begadim* and proceed toward the *Mizbayach*, Altar. Aharon was

then instructed to halt and wait. How long? He would be informed. Since he was not told to leave, he waited – without complaints. The Torah found this worthy of mention. Self-discipline determines the difference between a leader and everyone else.

Va'ani Tefillah

– Selach lanu Avinu ki chatanu m'chal lanu Malkeinu ki fashanu.

Slichah, forgiveness; *Avinu*, Father; *chatanu*, sin; *mechilah*, absolution; *Malkeinu*, King; *pashanu* – rebelled: six different terms, each expressing a different relationship, a different sin, and a different form of forgiveness. *Horav Avigdor Miller, zl*, shows how they each coincide with one another. *Selach* contains the same letters as *chasal*, which denotes finishing or ending. Thus, *selach* means unconditional forgiveness. Only a father can forgive unconditionally, because his love is unconditional. *Chatanu* is a sin which denotes lack of performance that we missed. A son's behavior toward his father is not considered rebellious, but rather, he is a *chotei*, because he has failed to render honor and perform his duties. When a subject is disloyal to his king, he is a *posheia*, rebellious. The king will absolve or pardon on the condition that the subject accept his sovereignty, because this is primarily the sin against a king – non-acceptance of his sovereignty.

We ask Hashem to absolve us of our disobedience, because we fully accept Him as our Sovereign. We ask Him to forgive us our lapses in performance, because we recognize Him as our true Father Who loves us unconditionally.

לזכר נשמת האשה החשובה,
מרת
פיגא רחל בת ר' משה צבי ע"ה בריענער פעלדמאן
פיה פתחה בחכמה ובאצילות היו הליכותיה
יראים ותלמידי חכמים נודעים היו אבותיה
גדולים סבלותיה בעת המלחמה ועצמות תלאותיה
אשת חיל נוחה לבריות ושלום כל נתיבותיה
רצויה לכל יודעיה, ומכירה חיבתו מידותיה
חסדים הרבה עשתה בין בגופה ובין במעותיה
למדו מדרכיה יוצא חלציה וישרים דורותיה
נפטרה בש"ט ערב פסח תשס"ב

In loving memory of
Mrs. Fanny (Brunner) Feldman
by her family



Parashas Tzav

תשע"ז

פרשת צו

**והרים את הדשן... ושמו אצל המזבח... והוצא את הדשן
He shall raise the ashes and place it next to the
Mizbayach... He shall remove the ashes. (6:3,4)**

The *avodah* in the *Mishkan/Bais Hamikdash* followed a daily routine. It was a clearly defined, Divinely-ordained, unchanging pattern of service. It began with the *Terumas HaDeshen*, the removal of the sacrificial ash from the previous day's offerings, followed by the placing of wood, so that the fire on the *Mizbayach*, Altar, continued to burn. The first sacrifice of the day, as well as the last sacrifice, was the *Korban Tamid*. *Tamid* means consistent, which is a perfect way to describe the *Korban*. It was a constant. When activities are carried out in a particular order, unchanging, repeated daily, it might lead to boring complacency. This was certainly not the case in the holiest of spiritual edifices. The only thing routine about the service was its invariability and unchanging nature.

The fact that the activities in the *Bais Hamikdash* followed an unvarying daily schedule teaches us an important lesson concerning spiritual ascendancy. *Horav Noach Weinberg, zl*, (quoted in the *Wisdom of Living*) derives from here that genuine, sustained growth is not the result of sudden inspirational bursts, or impulsive acts of spiritual service. It is achieved through constant, consistent perpetual and unremitting commitment and persistence. "Bursts", by their very nature, are not sustainable. In order to grow, one must have a foundation upon which he continually builds. So often we hear of someone who has become "turned on" to observance. Unless that "turn on" is structured into continuous, consistent and constant commitment and activity – it will, sadly, dissipate.

Constancy, consistency and continuousness are three requisites which one needs to maintain and sustain. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains how one acquires and integrates these very similar characteristics into our actions. Life is a gift from Hashem. At the end of his "time," a person would do anything for a few more days, hours, even minutes. Yet, we waste time indiscriminately, without realizing the preciousness of every moment. True living means using one's mind constantly. One does not take a vacation from thinking – unless he is not applying himself to what he is doing. Whatever he is doing – regardless of its nature – working on a business deal, having a conversation, reading an article, he should give it his full attention. Otherwise, he is not giving it his all. Every waking minute, one should think. Life is precious. Why waste it?

I always look at it from a practical perspective. Imagine, if at the end of our lives, we were given the opportunity to reclaim all the minutes we had wasted earlier in *schmoozing*, just wasting, doing nothing much of anything. We

would be shocked at how much of the precious time that has been allotted to us we could have used constructively. Now, when every minute matters, we see how really valuable those minutes are.

Consistency is probably the greatest key to spiritual growth. (I think it is the key to all success in life: material, social, educational, etc.) Focus on the important things in life – and stick to them. Jumping all over the place drives everyone around you batty – and destroys one's ability to achieve true enduring success. Children crave and need structure in order to advance. Discipline is based upon structure. They may refuse to go to bed on time every night, but when they do not get enough sleep, the next day they are off the wall. Likewise, our *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination, leaves us alone as long as we maintain consistency in behavior, sticking to a steady, structured routine. Try focusing on a *mitzvah* when the *yetzer hora* does everything to prevent our focus. The *yetzer hora* "leaves us alone" as long as we remain consistent. The second we go off the track, it jumps in. We have been breached.

Thus, the *Rosh Yeshivah* encourages each of his *talmidim* to select a goal carefully, to remain committed to it, in such a manner that he achieves his goal daily at the same time, place and manner. This is consistency. The *yetzer hora* does not want to challenge an individual who is consistent. It is so much easier to "work" on the "others." If one's goal is to complete a specific *sefer*, Torah volume, he should set aside a specific time of day which becomes *kodesh kodoshim*, holy of holies; nothing can deter him from that designated time. Thus, that apportioned time is not included in his regular daily schedule. It is on a totally different plane.

Continuousness. One can have the most honorable goal, but if he allows interruptions to creep in, he will not achieve strong success. The *Rosh Yeshivah* notes that one hour of uninterrupted learning is more beneficial than two hours of interrupted learning. One's train of thought is impeded and his retention becomes limited. Let us consider the famous analogy of a pot of water cooking on the stove: one cannot bring water to a boil when he constantly keeps removing the pot from the stove. Once again, focusing on a set goal and designating a specific set time, which is not to be interrupted under any circumstances, allows the individual to complete the task at hand in the least amount of time. In this manner, he will retain the material, because it is built upon a well-established, indurate foundation.

The famous *Tanna*, Rabbi Akiva, who altered his course of living midway in his life, was the product of the concept that enduring change is the result of persistent repetition. Rabbi Akiva did not have the luxury of a Jewish education. At age forty, he was bathing at a particular waterfall when he noticed a rock with a hole that was created by the falling water that had bored through it. It was a steady, continuous drip of water that was falling right

on the spot where there was a hole. He deduced that, if soft water can penetrate a hard rock, then all the more so Torah, which is compared to fire, can leave a lasting impression on a man's heart. So was launched the change that transformed Rabbi Akiva into the extraordinary teacher that he was.

Each and every drop – falling uninterrupted on the same spot – made an impact. Each and every drop counted, because each and every one was needed to make that hole. Furthermore, had they not all fallen on the same spot, the hole would not have occurred. This, explains Rav Weinberg, is the basis of *Yiddishkeit*. Every day, we recite the same blessings, the same prayers, and perform the same mitzvos. It is by virtue of these persistent, continuous endeavors that we grow daily in our relationship with Hashem. This is how we change and become one with Hashem.

I think that there is another important thought that should course through our minds on a constant basis. Veritably, many of us allow this somber thought to sneak in when we witness sobering circumstances. Horav Meir Premishlaner, *zl*, feels that this thought should be uppermost in our minds. He refers to the *pesukim* at the beginning of our *parsha* which address the service in which the *Kohen* removes the ash from the *Mizbayach*, Altar. Since this service involves a great deal of ash, it is likely that his *begadim*, Priestly vestments, will become soiled. Thus, he changes into older, more worn, garments. The *Pemishlaner* has a different take on the *pesukim*, *Ufashat es begadav*, “He shall remove his garments – and don other garments.” – Every Jew should (acknowledge and) remember that one day his regular garments will be removed, and he will be dressed in other garments: white shrouds in preparation for his burial. *V’hotzi es hadeshen*, “And he shall remove the ash” – His body, which has become his remains, will be removed outside of the city proper, *El makom tahor*; “To a pure place” – to the place designated for the eternal rest of all the living. *V’ha’esh al ha’Mizbayach tkad bo*, “The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning,” – the flames of *Gehinnom*, Purgatory, will exact their punishment on him. Therefore, he should live a life of *teshuvah*, repentance, in full awareness that there are consequences for the way in which one lives in this world.

The *Alter*, *m’Kelm*, *zl*, Horav Simchah Zissel Broide, emphasized that only uninterrupted and exhaustive self-discipline throughout one's lifetime can catalyze real and permanent change. Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, *zl*, the venerable *Mashgiach* of Mir and Ponevez, was a *Kelmer*; thus, he maintained an invariable schedule to the minute of the day. He never slept during the day since (he felt) this constituted a breach in his *avodah*, service, to Hashem. In order to serve Hashem, one must maintain an uninterrupted state of consciousness focused on the Almighty. He once remarked that, due to the intense pain that he suffered during an illness, his awareness of Hashem's Presence was compromised for perhaps a second or two. He said, “Already for many decades, I had not removed my mind for even one second from the *avodah* of *emunah*, faith; recently, in the hospital, the intense pain of my suffering penetrated into these thoughts. Now, I must rebuild everything again from the (very) foundation.”

There is an anecdotal story that occurred in Ponevez *Yeshivah* which (according to the perception of many people) showed Hashem's concern for the *Mashgiach's* undeviating *avodah*. Following World War II, the *Bobover Rebbe*, Horav Shlomo Halberstam, *zl*, came to Eretz Yisrael to render emotional and spiritual support to his *chassidim* who had survived the European inferno. He was a beloved *Rebbe* and

father to his flock; as such, his visit would console and buttress the lives that they were in the process of rebuilding. An influential lay person was able to secure the use of the *Kollel Bais Hamedrash* of Ponevez for the *Rebbe* to conduct a *tisch* (literally) table, during which the *chassidim* gather around a table for festive singing and words of Torah directed by the *Rebbe*. This is common fare in the *chassidic* world. (This was quite unusual for a Lithuanian *Yeshivah*, but the *Bobover Rebbe* was quite an unusual individual who captivated the hearts of all who met him.)

The *Kollel Bais Hamedrash* was situated just above the small apartment which was home to the *Mashgiach*. The room was packed, standing room only, filled with *chassidim* and men of good will who wanted to observe and bask in the *Rebbe's* holy aura. It was quite noisy and joyous. The issue was the time, because the *Mashgiach* went to bed nightly at 11:00 p.m. and was up by 5:00 a.m., arriving in the *Yeshivah* at 6:00 a.m. to begin his daily *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty. He never deviated from this schedule. At eleven o'clock that night, the *Rebbe* was in the midst of conducting his *tisch*, when suddenly, out of the blue, the *tisch*, table, collapsed! Without a table, the *Rebbe* cannot conduct a *tisch*. The *Rebbe* bid the crowd *Gutt Shabbos* – and the *tisch* came to a hasty conclusion. After all, what is a *tisch* without a *tisch*? It was 11:00 p.m., and the *Mashgiach's* sleep could not be disturbed. Heaven had intervened.

ופשט את בגדיו ולבש בגדים אחרים

He shall remove his garments, and he shall wear other garments. (6:4)

Rashi observes that changing garments is not a *chovah*, obligation, but rather, proper conduct, so that the *Kohen* does not sully his clean vestments. It makes sense that the garments which one wears in the kitchen when he is cooking a pot of food for his master will not be the same garments that he will wear when serving his master. It just takes *seichel*, common sense. Thus, he dons other garments which are inferior to his vestments.

How often do we read *Rashi's* commentary and not incorporate it into our lifestyle? Upon serving the King/Master, one wears “different” clothes than he wears when he is preparing the food. Horav Moshe Feinstein, *zl*, notes that *Hilchos Derech Eretz*, laws that teach us proper conduct, are real, since the *Kohen* changes clothes due to *derech eretz*. *Davening* before Hashem in *shul* is a classic case of standing before the King. Thus, Rav Moshe says, one should wear respectable clothing – even change from his work clothes (if possible) to demonstrate his respect.

While this concept applies any time one enters a *shul*, it is especially significant on *Shabbos*, when there is the added layer of *kavod*, honoring, *Shabbos*. Obviously, the way we dress is a “cultural” thing, with some dressing formally and others choosing to dress casually. I only wonder if we would dress the same way for a job interview or to meet a distinguished public official. The respect one accords others is often commensurate with his own degree of self-respect. It is difficult to demand respect of someone who is challenged by his own self-esteem.

וזאת תורת החטאת

This is the law of the sin-offering. (6:18)

Sin is relative in the attitude of the sinner with regard to the sin; and in the status of the sinner which, commensurate with his position, demands a higher standard in his demeanor and attitude. The *Korban Chatas*, sin-offering, was brought as penance following the commission of an *aveirah b'shogeg*, inadvertent sin. One wonders altogether why penance is required. It is not as if the person had acted maliciously. Everybody errs. Nobody is perfect. Horav Moshe Soloveitchik, *zl*, (Zurich) likened this to a person carrying a package of inexpensive glasses. If, once in a while, a glass slips out of his hand, falls to the ground, and breaks – it is not the end of the world. The replacement value is minimal. When he carries lead crystal, however, such that each glass is highly expensive, he takes utmost care in seeing that the package is delivered safely, with ultimate precision. This is the disparity between mundane activity and spiritual endeavor. Upon executing spiritual endeavor, one cannot afford a lapse; he might shatter the crystal. He has no room for error.

Furthermore, as noted by Horav Mordechai Zuckerman, *zl*, in the previous *parsha* (4:2), the Torah sequences the laws of *chatas* in a descending order: beginning with the sin of the *Kohen Gadol*; followed by the *Sanhedrin*, members of the High Court; then the *Melech*, king, with the individual Jew bringing up the rear. Each one in accordance with his spiritual station in life goes to the head of the line, because the greater one is, that much more is demanded and expected of him. What to the simple man might be viewed as a lapse is to the *Kohen Gadol* a manifestation of moral/ethical turpitude. With the position comes responsibility.

וזאת תורת זבח השלמים... אם על חורה יקריבו

This is the law of the feast Peace-offering... if he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:11,12)

One who has survived a life-threatening crisis brings a *Korban Todah*, thanksgiving-offering: first, to demonstrate that he acknowledges that it was Hashem Who saved him; second, to pay gratitude to Hashem. David *Hamelech* says (*Tehillim* 107:21,22) *Yodu la'Hashem chasdo, v'niflaosav livnei adam. V'yizbechu zivchei Todah v'yisapru maasav b'rinah*. “Let them acknowledge to Hashem His kindness, and to the children of man His wonders. And let them sacrifice thanksgiving-offerings and relate His works with joyful song.” We derive from here that the offering of a *Korban Todah* is of overriding significance and is an integral part of the process of expressing gratitude.

The *Acharonim* debate whether the *Todah*-offering is a Biblically – mandated sacrifice which is brought by a person who acknowledges his debt of gratitude to Hashem, or is it simply common sense and human decency to say “thank you” for favors received. The fact that it is a *Korban Shelamim*, peace-offering, which is discretionary (except for festivals when it is mandated), implies that it is a free-will offering of gratitude.

In reference to the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* previously cited, the *Sefas Emes* derives that actually there is a process of thanksgiving whereby one first thanks Hashem for the individual, specific favor that he has just received. This is then followed by a more encompassing, general statement of gratitude for all favors received. All too often we are very “stingy” with our gratitude, almost begrudgingly rendering our appreciation for specifics without acknowledging all of the good

we have benefited from Hashem. The *pasuk* teaches us that first we should acknowledge the specific favor/miracle and then relate all of Hashem's wonders. We should not scrimp on our gratitude.

One of our primary issues with rendering gratitude is that we are under the misconception that gratitude is given only following an incident during which we have suffered – or almost suffered – and were spared, emerging healthy with our material assets intact. What about one who enjoys sustained good fortune, who has not been ill? Is he to bring a *Korban Todah*? The *Gerrer Rebbe*, *zl*, the *Bais Yisrael*, related that his father, the *Imrei Emes*, showed him a letter that he had received from a prominent *chasid*, follower, in Warsaw, who writes: “*Baruch Hashem*, I am doing well: more than enough livelihood, good health; I learn every day and *daven* well. Do I really need to be *mazkir* (literally have my name mentioned to the *Rebbe*, to petition his blessing)? After all (the letter implied), does one petition (or pay gratitude) when life is good and things are going well?”

The *Imrei Emes* quoted from the *Chovos HaLevavos*, (*Shaar Avodas Elokim* 6) “And (commensurate) with all that Hashem adds on good (with the more one receives) he is obligated to serve Him.” In other words – the more one receives from Hashem, the greater is his obligation to pay gratitude. It is not about “being saved”; it is about being the beneficiary of Hashem's goodness. Hashem gives; we must say thank you. Gratitude is not about what we might have lost; it is about what we have!

I recently came across a deeper understanding of Hashem's beneficence, and how it is that much greater than the good that we receive from human beings. In our daily prayer, we recite *Shemoneh Esrai* thrice. The blessing of *Modim*, thanksgiving, in which we pay gratitude for all that we receive from Hashem, concludes with two compelling statements: *HaTov ki lo chalu Rachamecha; v'Ha'meracheim ki lo samu chasadecha*. “The Beneficent One, for Your compassions were never exhausted”; and “The Compassionate One, for Your Kindness never ended.” In his *Kochvei Ohr*, Horav Yitzchak Blazer, *zl*, distinguishes between human characteristics and those same characteristics when they were attributed to Hashem.

Human characteristics have limitations. For example, human compassion is limited. Not all people are the same; some exhibit greater feelings of compassion than others. Nonetheless, if a poor man were to petition a wealthy, kind, compassionate, G-d-fearing man for material assistance, the kind man would happily contribute in accordance with his personal degree of *rachamim*. If the poor man asks for an increase, if he feels that what he has received (despite its generous amount) is still insufficient – will the benefactor add to his donation? No! His limits of *rachamim* go just so far.

On the other hand, there is no end to *rachamei Shomayim*, Heavenly compassion. Hashem graces a person's life commensurate to the person's relationship with Hashem. Additionally, if one is sincere in his tearful petition, Hashem will give more. Hashem is the “Giver Who keeps on giving.”

Second is the human being who is an incredible *ba'al chesed*. He helps whenever he can. As inexhaustible as he may appear, he, too, has limits. When he runs out of strength, he no longer can perform acts of *chesed*. Hashem, however, has no limit; He continues doing forever. So, we have two wonderful men. One has incredible compassion – which is limited. One