

JEWISH STUDY NETWORK

Pinchas

The Best You

In this week's parsha, Hashem, G-d, commanded Moses that the Jews should bring a daily sacrifice. The sages (Midrash Tanchuma Naso 11) say that there were three times that Moses was startled by commands Hashem gave him. These commands were:

- 1) Hashem commanded each Jew to give one half Shekel calling it, "a redemption for their soul". Moses wondered, considering how precious and valuable life is, how could one simply redeem himself with a small coin?
- 2) Hashem commanded that the Mishkan, Tabernacle, be built in a place where He could dwell. Moses wondered how mere humans could possibly produce a resting place for the Infinitely Great Hashem?
- 3) In our Parsha, Hashem commanded that the Jews offer the Korban Tamid, daily offering, calling it "an offering for Me". Moses wondered how they could offer anything sufficient enough for Hashem?!

G-d's Response

G-d gave one answer to all three quandaries. It is fundamental to our daily service. "Moses, I'm not asking you to give according to My standards, I am asking you to give according to the best of your abilities!" Hashem asks for our effort and our sincerity. Nothing more and nothing less.

Every person is born with their own potential and abilities. Our job in life is to give it our all. Nothing more is expected, and nothing less than our best (which of course allows for mess-ups too)! The sages (Berachos 5b) state, "whether you produce a lot or a little is not important, Heaven only looks at your intentions and efforts!"



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Illustrative Story

Rabbi Naftoli Amsterdam (1832-1916) once bemoaned his deficiencies to his mentor, the famed Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810- 1883). “If only I had the brain of the Shages Aryeh (a renowned Torah genius), the enthusiasm of the Yisod V’Shoresch HaAvodah (a famous work expressing exuberant feeling about service of G-d), and middot, character traits like you, my mentor, then I could be a true servant of Hashem! Rabbi Salanter replied in a kind but stern manner: “Your assumption is incorrect. You strive to serve Hashem to the best of your abilities, with your brain, your heart and your middot! That is what Hashem desires from you!”

Recurring Theme

This idea is found once again in the parsha when Joshua was appointed as the successor of Moses. Moses requested from Hashem that the incoming leader possess one fundamental trait and Hashem agreed with him regarding the importance of that trait. The leader must understand each Jew individually, according to his own capabilities!

Every morning we pronounce a blessing in Birchat Hashachar expressing our appreciation to Hashem for who we are. “She’asah li kol tzorki, Thank You Hashem for giving me everything that I need!” You provided me with all of my physical needs as well as my spiritual needs. We surely beg Hashem for more earthly care and more divine inspiration, but the perspective is still kept straight. We recognize that Hashem has provided us with all of our needs to serve Him the best that we can!

There is no competition to outdo anyone else! We are all here for the unified purpose of serving Hashem, and each of us possesses varied talents and capabilities that Hashem has endowed us with. Our job is to bring out our unique potentials and to serve Hashem to the best of our ability!

Shabbat Shalom

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