

# The Pursuit of *Tamid*

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Rabbi Daniel Fridman

There are certain things in life for which simply doing justice requires immersion. To a great extent, the problem that man confronts, and in particular, Torah conscious man, is that there are multiple values that are deserving of such singular focus; if we aspire to deep and enriching human relationships, we know that they require vast investments of time and energy. Likewise, should we wish to find a source of constant meaning in the Torah, we know well that we shall only extract in inspiration that which we invest in perspiration. Should we wish to perfect our craft, be it one of vocation or of avocation, there can be no replacement for enormous investment of time.

Hence, the dilemma persists, and grows increasingly vexing as we ponder, often with a nagging sense of despair, the different values to which we are called, and the immense, and competing pressures upon our time. While ultimately the Sages of the Talmud deemed his approach largely impracticable, one could certainly sympathize with R. Shimon b. Yochai's view that should the Jewish people wholly immerse themselves in Torah, 'their work would be done by others.'

The Torah proposes a remarkable solution to this problem of *ha-yom katzar vi'ba melacha merubah*. The lynchpin of the proposal is the word *tamid*, which appears almost exclusively (nine out of ten times it appears in the entire Torah) in the context of the Mishkan. The simple meaning of the word is always or constantly, but if one looks a bit closer, what emerges is that the institution of *tamid* can actually be subdivided into three distinct categories.

First, there are three elements in the Mishkan that were *tamid* in the simplest sense of the term- constantly. They included the placing of showbread, the hovering of the protective cloud or fire outside the tent, and the fire that must constantly burn on the altar.

The second category concerns a different concept of *tamid*. The obligation of the Kohen Gadol to wear the breastplate and the *tzitz* in a fashion that the Torah describes as *tamid* does not mean that he had to wear his work clothes when he went to sleep. Rather, what is meant is that when he is engaged in his function as Kohen Gadol, he must always wear these special garments.

Finally, the third category of *tamid* relates to those things that took place in the *mishkan* on a *consistent* basis. This category includes the daily animal offering, and the perfectly parallel institutions of the daily incense and the daily flour offering, all of which featured symmetric morning and afternoon components.

It is fascinating to note that, as it concerns the *ner tamid*, referenced at the very outset of the parshah, the range of views in the Rishonim present alternative models of tamid which align broadly with the respective categories delineated above. Rashi, for example, interprets the word to mean *consistently*, that the menorah had to be kindled not all day and all night, but simply, every single night, to last until the morning. Rambam, conversely, understood the obligation to mean that the nerot should burn *constantly*, all of the time. Should the kohen enter the sanctuary in the morning and find the wicks extinguished, he was obliged to relight them. Ramban, in an exquisitely formulated synthesis of these two different approaches, argues that while Rashi was correct regarding six of the seven lights, one wick, the *ner ma'aravi*, had to burn *constantly*. This constantly burning wick would be used to regenerate the six *consistently* burning wicks.

By expanding the usage of *tamid* to two categories beyond the simple meaning of the word, the Torah is giving us a crucial insight into our original dilemma. Perpetual engagement in certain activities is not always practically possible, but there are at least two other models for achieving a level of *tamid* in the areas which matter most.

Every moment the Kohen Gadol had the opportunity to serve in his function, he did so in full regalia, with the *tzitz* and the *choshen*. In so doing, he achieved not a *tamid* of quantity, but of quality. If we have two hours to spend with family, to learn Torah, to engage in *chessed*, we need to be fully emotionally and intellectually present, in precisely the manner that the Kohen Gadol was fully present whenever he could be in the *mikdash*.

Second, by creating fixed, inviolable times for family, learning, or chessed- *itim kevu'im*- on the model of the daily animal, flour, and incense offerings, we find another avenue toward *tamid*. In these instances, our demonstration of consistency reflects our aspiration for practically unattainable constancy. As such, it is equally deserving of the singular honor of being called *tamid*. And, like Ramban's *ner ma'aravi* to the rest of the *nerot*, when life circumstances allow us to more fully engage than that which might be possible at present, there is little doubt that the tamid of consistency can and will kindle the tamid of constancy.

Whatever avenue of *tamid* is available to us, based on our life circumstances and competing responsibilities, what is certain is that, to the extent that we are being honest with ourselves regarding adopting whichever approach is maximally ambitious given practical constraints, we will merit an abiding and indeed constant sense of His presence: in the words of the Psalmist, "I have placed the Lord before me always (*tamid*), he is at my right hand, I shall not falter." שׁוֹיִתִּי ה' לְנֶגְדֵי תָמִיד, כִּי מִיְמִינִי בַל אֲמוּט.