

The Pursuit of *Tamid*

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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 multiples 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. Hence, the dilemma emerges, and grows increasingly vexing as we ponder, often with a nagging sense of despair, the different values to which we are obliged.

The Torah proposes a remarkable solution to this problem. 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, 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. 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 those things that took place in the *mishkan* on a consistent and fixed 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.

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 practically possible, but there are at least two other models for achieving a level of *tamid* in the things that matter the 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 a not a *tamid* of quantity, but of quality. If we have two hours to spend with family or to learn Torah, 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 and learning, on the model of the daily animal, flour, and incense offerings, we find another avenue toward *tamid*. Our demonstration of consistency reflects our aspiration for unattainable constancy, and as such, is equally deserving of the singular honor of being called *tamid*.