

Tetzaveh: What is a Matmid?

- Nisson Shulman.

Avi Mori, Rav Moshe Yitzchok Shulman zt"l, principal of Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Boro Park, taught what a matmid really means, by comparing it to the karban tamid, not "always", but regularly. An example of Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l, when he was undergoing a serious operation and refused, even on the day of surgery, to forego his kviut quota. Yehoshua and the angel near Yericho, explained in this spirit.

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Avi Mori, Harav Moshe Yitzchok Shulman, zt"l, was a great educator, for 27 years the principal of the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Boro Park during its heyday, and president of the Association of Day School Principals for fifteen years.

He had theories of education worth studying. And one of them dealt with the nature of a Matmid.

He pointed out that MATMID and TAMID are the same word. And in this week's portion we read of the KORBAN TAMID, about which the Torah teaches ET HAKEVET HAECHAD TAASE BABOKER VEET HAKEVES HASHENI BEIN HAARBAYIM.

He explained that the verse does not use the word TAMID as is normally understood, to mean "always". It means "regularly". The morning tamid offered at a set time in the morning, and the evening tamid at its proper time. The same is true about the MATMID. A true MATMID is someone who is careful to learn regularly, keeping to a set time, observing a regular schedule. Keeping true to a regular schedule of learning is the only way to really grow in learning. And he illustrated this in two ways.

First, he established the relationship between Torah learning and the TAMID offering by referring to the confrontation between the angel and Joshua in Yericho (Yehoshua 5:13-15). Our sages teach that the angel found fault with Joshua on two counts; "Yesterday you failed to offer the KORBAN TAMID and today you have failed to study Torah". When Yehoshua asked about which sin is he being especially called to account, the angel answer ATA BATI, I have come especially about the failure to learn Torah. (See Radak and other commentators.)

The connection between the two, the regular offering and the regular study of Torah is clear. And the angels answer emphasizes the primacy of Torah even over the regular KORBAN.

Then Avi Mori reminded me of an episode demonstrating what a KVIUT really means.

My father was born in Minsk. Orphaned when very young and adopted by grandparents, he

was the first one from Minsk to learn in the Slabodke Yeshiva. He returned to Minsk for his Bar Mitzvah. That year, he told me, close to 40 of the leading young scholars of Minsk came to Slabodke Yeshiva to learn. Leading the group were two men who would always thereafter be known as GEDOLEI HADOR, Rabbi Aharon Kotler zt"l, and Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l.

The friendship of those early years lasted throughout my father's life, especially with Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky.

It transpired that Avi Mori was hospitalized at Israel Zion (later Maimonides Hospital) for a minor illness. At the same time Rabbi Kaminetzky was admitted for a serious thyroid operation. I was constantly bringing messages back and forth between the friends. At one point Rav Kaminetzky gave his last will to me to take to my father to hold, in case he should not survive the operation, so serious was a thyroid operation at that time, in the early nineteen fifties.

So when Rav Kaminetzky, zt"l, was scheduled to return from the operation, I was dispatched to his bedside to ascertain his condition, and whether our prayers were answered for his survival and recovery.

I was surprised to find that he was just being wheeled out to the operating theatre, three hours late. The doctor was standing nearby, so I asked the obvious question. "Why the delay? Was something wrong?" And the doctor answered, "Not at all. There was nothing wrong. But the Rabbi prevailed upon me to postpone the operation, and I was able to accommodate him because this slot was open." And the doctor added the following words. "The Rabbi had not yet finished his quota of study for today, and wanted to do so before the operation."

Imagine! An operation that was surely a matter of life and death! And yet, Rav Kaminetzky had a KEVIUT, a regular time and a regular quota of learning, and would not violate it even at such a critical time, if it was at all possible.

That is a MATMID. Not one who learns all the time, commendable as that is. But one who will do everything in his power to maintain the regular times of learning. Like the KORBAN TAMID at its regular appointed time, so the MATMID at his regular appointed time, even at critical moments in life. "That", concluded my father, zt"l, "is what makes a GADOL". That is an example of a true MATMID.