

For it is a wage for you in exchange for your service in the Ohel Moed. (18:31)

The Torah describes the *Maaser*, tithe, which is given to the *Levi* as payment for the service Hashem requires them to perform. Nothing is innately holy about wages. This applies across the board to all *matnos Kehunah*, gifts given to the *Kohanim*, and *matnos Leviyah*, gifts given to the *Leviim*, which are all considered payment for their service. The *Sefer Yagdil Torah* quotes the **Ohr Sameach** who questions this *halachah*. The *Kohanim* receive a number of *matanos*, gifts: *Terumah*, *Terumas Maaser*, *Pidyon HaBen*, etc. A *Kohen* does not have to be actively involved in sacred service in the Sanctuary to receive his due. Indeed, if we were to think about it, the average *Kohen* must work only one or two days a year. There were twenty-four *mishmaros*, watches, during which one *mishmor* worked for a week. During the course of the year, there are at least fifty weeks. Each *mishmor* is divided according to its *Bais Av*, Father's House, with each *Bais Av* receiving one day's work. Thus, the most an individual *Kohen* worked was one or two days a year. If so, why does he receive all of those gifts? There is no reason that the *Kohen* cannot take a job just like any other Jew for the other 363 (excluding *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*, of course) days of the year in order to support his family. Why should he not do this, and be like everybody else?

The *Ohr Sameach* teaches us a powerful lesson, one which explains the overriding significance of learning Torah, whenever and wherever. In order to serve in the *Bais HaMikdash*, even for one day, one must prepare an entire year! This indicates the lofty nature of serving Hashem. The *Kohen* must have clarity in all of the *halachos*; he must personally be on the spiritual level required of one who serves Hashem in the Sanctuary. He must have the proper mindset. All of this requires extreme preparation. One who blows the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* or serves as *shaliach tzibbur*, *chazzan*, on the *Yamim Noraim* does not just saunter up to the podium and "perform". He must prepare during the month of *Elul*, realizing the enormous responsibility, which rests on his shoulders.

Preparation for any endeavor, especially for a *mitzvah*, is in and of itself a lofty activity. In a sense, the preparation one does indicates how much he appreciates and values the *mitzvah*, the endeavor. Sports figures spend months practicing for the sum total of a few games. It often comes down to one move, one pitch, one basket, one run, one catch, but it takes years of practice to achieve the perfection required to complete that move. Why should Torah and *mitzvos* be different? Those who spend their lives studying Torah are acutely aware of this reality. It is a shame that the average Jew, who should be supportive of this endeavor, is unaware of this. I wonder if he would go under the knife of a surgeon who did not practice all of the time to perfect his procedure.