

“The wealthy shall not increase and the poor shall not decrease from half a shekel to give Hashem’s offering.” (30:15)

Everyone was to contribute the same amount, so that no Jew could say that his contribution was greater – or more significant – than that of someone else. *Horav David Feinstein, Shlita*, elaborates on this idea. One who is blessed with great wealth or has a brilliant mind, such that he has amassed great Torah scholarship, cannot claim that he serves Hashem more completely than the ordinary person who serves Hashem humbly and obediently – conducting himself scrupulously in accordance with the Code of Jewish Law. Likewise, the worker who assembles a computer module is no different than the one who makes the screws and bolts that hold the apparatus together. Just because people serve in various capacities does not mean one is any greater than the other.

What really matters as far as Hashem is concerned? It is neither the position nor the function of one’s endeavor; it is neither money nor brains. In addition, Hashem does not count how much time a person devotes to His service. The two things that Hashem views as important are the proportion of one’s available time that he puts to good use and the sincerity with which he carries out this endeavor.

Thus, Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the greatest Torah scholar and quintessential leader of the Jewish People, does not view himself as being any more distinguished than the most simple of his followers. Moshe saw only one distinction in regard to himself: he had a greater load to carry. His responsibility paralleled that of the most common Jew: maximize your time and potential to be all that you can be.

It is for this reason that at the beginning of *Parashas Netzavim*, Moshe emphasizes, “You are standing this day, all of you, before Hashem” (*Devarim* 29:9). In Moshe’s eyes, all Jews were the same, standing before him that day as equals – from the greatest leaders to the youngest child, from the most profound professional to the simple laborer. One who is not that gifted cannot say, “I am not smart, and, therefore, Hashem expects less of me.” It is not true. Hashem expects that each individual give up as much of the twenty-four hour day that he has available – qualitatively and quantitatively.

If one looks at a classroom, he will notice different students with differing strengths and backgrounds. Some may function better than others. Success should be measured with the yardstick of how much of what they could have accomplished in the time allotted to them did they accomplish and the level of sincerity that accompanied this endeavor. If we make use of this scale, we might end up viewing our students and our children in a different light – a more accurate one.