

Midrash – Devotion to Study

He said to them, "O how unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. – Luke 24:25-27 HCSB

The disciples knew the Scriptures, yet missed the Messiah. Jesus showed them His presence in the entire Old Testament. Understanding the fundamentals of what passes for Christianity today is fairly straightforward. Memorize a certain series of dogmatic statements, give intellectual assent to them, and “Voila!” you’re in.

Understanding the fundamentals of [Tzedekah](#) is a different matter. Tzedekah is not about your mind, but your heart and a real change of heart inevitably results in changed behavior.

That is why the [tzaddikim](#) spend large amounts of time meditating on the practical application of the Scriptures to their lives. We want to try out the new-found life-changing power the Holy Spirit has granted us.¹ We also want to demonstrate to God and others that a real change has taken place in our hearts – that we do not have dead faith.²

It is necessary to show that we have repented of our sins and turned to God to be forgiven.³ Conversion is not a private matter and should result in a changed ethical behavior easily observed by others.

According to John, we should actively seek out and care for the needy; work in the government to bring about social change; pay our taxes; continue working but not be greedy; obey the government; serve in the military if need be; do not cheat, lie or abuse our power; and be content with what God has given us.

Knowing what is appropriate behavior, however, is not a simple matter and can require a lifetime of study. American president Lyndon Johnson once said, “A president’s hardest task is not to do what is right, but to know what is right.”

The tzaddikim, therefore, make midrash, “devotion to study”, a major discipline in their lives. Our churches are to be “beit midrash”, or houses of study. We study in order to make sure that we are the best workers we can be, that we are approved by our Master, and that we have a proper understanding of the Scriptures.⁴ We must ensure that we are passing on the [kabalah](#) we received in the form of wholesome [masoret](#) to the next generation of believers.⁵

Immanuel Kant, an otherwise intelligent man, argued on moral grounds that one must never lie, even to a murderer who asks the location of his intended victim. But the tzaddikim know that [Elohay Mishpat](#) does at times allow them to lie in order to save a life.⁶ In fact, He honors those who so value life.

Such issues are sometimes difficult to resolve and only a person dedicated to midrash will be able to tease apart the complex nuances life can bring.

Note: The names of God are explained at www.pastorpauley.com/tzedekah/concepts/hnog.htm. The Hebrew terms are further explained at www.pastorpauley.com/tzedekah/concepts/glossary.htm.

¹ Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:12

² James 2:14-18

³ Mark 1:2-8; Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-18

⁴ 2 Timothy 2:15

⁵ 2 Timothy 2:2

⁶ Joshua 2:1-16