

Diligence | *Zerizut* | זְרִיזוּת

*Always find something to do — for yourself or for a friend,
and don't allow a moment of your life to be wasted.*

The animal spirit finds its satisfaction in dreaming or fantasizing, and never grows tired of a life of idleness. As we already mentioned, all its activities and movements are a result of its being moved by the “passing wind.” However, the intellectual spirit — despite its constant preoccupation with monitoring the thought process so as to develop ideas — tires of this activity quickly and yearns to return and occupy itself with study or with a task that it can undertake until it is exhausted. It can then return and monitor the thought process until it has refreshed itself. The study or task, however, must be rewarding — i.e., it must provide pleasure or delight — or at least it must provide protection from pain or loss.

We previously explained that there are pleasures which delight the *yetzer ha-ra* and those which delight the *yetzer ha-tov* — i.e., animal pleasures and intellectual pleasures. Man is required to serve God utilizing both these inclinations. Hence, he has no choice but to cede some of his time so as to dispose his animal spirit to seek to fulfill the Divine service. Nevertheless, the bulk of his time must be directed towards regaling in the delights of the supernal soul, progressively perfecting oneself in this area daily. It is only in this manner that one can be seen as leading a “human” life [i.e., fulfilling his potential as a human]. This is not true of the wicked, who waste their share in this precious life and die with nothing to show for themselves!

Our reference in this section is not only to complete idleness, which leads people to [intellectual] dullness and death, as our Sages (*Avot deRabbi Natan* 11) said: *People only die because they are idle* (הַבַּטָּלָה), but even to the short amount of time which one spends on the pleasures of the *yetzer ha-ra* beyond that called for by one's Divine obligations. This too can be seen as “idleness” — one is fattening the “elephant” and subjugating oneself to its service. People who find that their inclination has subdued them through force of habit and they are therefore pursuing a life of idleness and laziness must cure themselves through disciplining themselves in the trait of diligence.

Rabbi Mendel of Satanov. (1845). *Chesbon ha-Nefesh*. (D. Landesman, trans.) Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1995. Pages 164-169.