

PARSHAS TZAV: BASIC TRAINING

by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz

Throughout the Torah, two expressions of speech are primarily used when mitzvos are related to us - 'amar' and 'dabeir.' (For example, Va'yomer ..., or va'yedabeir ...) Generally speaking, the word 'amar' denotes a softer form of expression while 'dabeir' infers a more direct type of verbal instruction. In the opening words of this week's parsha, however, a third, firmer form of oral instruction is used; a tzivui or command. "Tzav es Aharon v'es bonov - command Aharon and his sons." This is a more direct type of instruction, one that seems to be firmer than the dabeir expression.

Rashi opens his commentary on this week's parsha (Vayikrah 6:2) by explaining that the Torah uses the emphatic expression of 'tzav' (command) to inform the kohanim that they needed to be especially careful in their service of Hashem in the mishkan. Rashi explains that the 'tzav' commandment exhorts the kohanim to follow these instructions "Miyad u'lidoros - to perform them immediately and [to pass these instructions along] to future generations of their children. (See full text of Rashi for additional insight regarding the tzav expression)

Why Now?

Several questions arise:

Firstly, Parshas Tzav opens with a discussion of how a korban olah (an elevation offering) was prepared. If korbanos require a tzav expression to underline their importance, why was this expression not used earlier in Parshas Vayikrah when the korban olah was first introduced? Why is the tzav command used only when it is repeated in this week's parsha?

Additionally, we can ask a broader question on the treatment of the korbanos in these two parshiyos. Why was there a need to repeat the instructions for a korban olah in Parshas Tzav when it was already mentioned in Parshas Vayikrah?

Finally, why was the emphatic term tzav utilized when discussing korbanos? There are so many mitzvos that seem to be equally important to those of the korbanos. Why, then, was such emphasis placed on these halachos?

Basic Training

To gain deeper insight into this matter and to address these three questions, we can perhaps draw on the insight of the Ramban, who points out that there is a fundamental difference between the two

parshiyos. Parshas Vayikrah approaches the topic of korbanos from the perspective of the one donating the sacrifice, while Parshas Tzav takes a different track - addressing the korbanos as they relate to the kohanim who perform the actual service. Parshas Vayikrah begins with "Dabeir el Bnei Yisroel (Vayikrah 1:2)", while this week's parsha starts with, "Dabeir el Aharon (6:2)".

I would like to expand on the thought of the Ramban and suggest that the term 'atzav' is most appropriate when speaking to the kohanim during their initial training for serving in the mishkan.

Perhaps the training program of the Armed Services, lehavdil, would be an appropriate analogy to explain the concept of acclimating individuals to work in the broad framework of a unit. Much thought is given into planning the training of these recruits during their period of basic training. All branches of the Armed Services have a period of basic training for incoming recruits. During this time, dramatically diverse groups of people are trained to join together for the common good.

Joining Forces

All recruits share the universal goal of defending their country when they enter the service. However, as diverse individuals they have different backgrounds and different frames of reference. It is the job of the drill instructor to have them blend into a cohesive unit. After all, in the battlefield, their lives will quite literally depend on effectively following orders - whether or not they agree with them or whether they understand the bigger picture of the reasoning for those directives. Therefore, the unit is stressed, not the individual. To achieve this result and to promote the feeling of unity, individual hairstyles and individual forms of dress are discarded and replaced with across-the-board hairstyles and standard uniforms.

The reason for all this unit building is that in the battlefield, one must follow the commander regardless of his or her preferences. If the general issues orders for his sergeants to take a particular hill, those directives must be followed, regardless of any individual soldier's thought process. Imagine the level of havoc that would reign if every soldier created and implemented his own battle strategy!

Entering the Service of Hashem

This would perhaps explain why the term 'atzav' was used as the kohanim were inaugurated into the service of Hashem in this week's parsha. Precise and specific instructions were given regarding the halachos of all the korbanos. The 'elite unit' of kohanim was tasked with the job of carrying out those instructions. In that context, a commandment is perfectly in order.

I would like to suggest a deeper meaning in the words of Rashi (6:2), "Miyad u'lidoros - to perform them [the mitzvos of the kohanim] immediately and [to pass these instructions along] to future generations of their children.

Miyad, immediately, is the essence of a command. Do it now. We can discuss it later, but for the moment, just do as you are told. I would like to suggest this type of thinking is a necessary

component of a Torah Jew and an eved Hashem. Surely we should strive to understand and find meaning in all of Hashem's mitzvos. But there are some that we may never fully comprehend. Our mission in life is to perform all of Hashem's mitzvos - miyad, as an immediate command. For if we do not do so, or if we 'pick and choose' - performing only those we fully understand, it weakens our bond with Hashem and makes it nearly impossible to transmit our mesorah (tradition) to the next generation.

We can perhaps read this theme into the words of Rashi. Miyad, u'ledoros. We are instructed to perform the mitzvos as commandments. Doing so will enable us to grow as Torah Jews and pass our mesorah to future generations.

Best wishes for a Gutten Shabbos

Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz and **Torah.org**. Rabbi Horowitz is the founder and dean of Yeshiva Darchei Noam in Monsey, NY, as well as the founder and Program Director of Agudath Israel's Project Y.E.S. (Youth Enrichment Services), which helps at-risk teens and their parents. He is a popular lecturer on teaching and parenting topics in communities around the world, and is the author of several best-selling parenting tape and CD sets. For more information on Rabbi Horowitz's parenting tapes, visit <http://www.rabbihorowitz.com/> or call 845-352-7100 X 133.