

Parshas Tzav

This week's Parsha provides the laws regarding the measurements of the various sacrifices. The first Rashi highlights that the use of the word Tzav—"command"—conveys a sense of urgency and encourages excitement and alacrity in fulfilling the mitzvah. Rashi quotes Rabbi Shimon, saying that this ruling, to serve Hashem enthusiastically, is especially when 'monetary loss is involved.' According to some explanations, such as Ramban, the monetary loss is that Kohen had to abandon his day job to do the service, i.e., causing an economic loss. Others explain that even though there is a benefit to the animal's skin, one may make one type of sacrifice with more financial gain than others. Therefore, the Posuk is telling us to follow the laws and perform the Mitzvah as it is supposed to be done.

The theme of serving Hashem with alacrity (fervour and excitement) in the Parsha is not isolated, but it resonates in the Haftorah from Jeremiah, which continues the theme of the sacrifices. This connection is crucial as it reinforces the idea of serving Hashem with alacrity by telling us that the sacrifices must have the right intentions and not to, heaven forbid, serve Hashem with outward practice but devoid of spirit.

But this week, we read the additional portion from Chukas on Parshas Parah and the Haftorah for that. The theme of Parshas Parah is that Hashem tells us to do things even if we don't quite understand, and we still do them with alacrity. The actual purpose of reading

Parah is not just to learn the laws relating to becoming purified if we are impure, but it is to prepare us for the upcoming Sacrifices for Pesach, the upcoming holiday for which every person, young and old, is required to partake. This clarity of purpose keeps the reader engaged and focused.

In the portions of Tanya learned this week, the Alter Rebbe explains how vital our souls are to this world. The Alter Rebbe explains that by doing Mitzvos, more than just the acting positive, and a good thing, the person draws infinite divine energy into the physical realm. More important is the novel approach that every Jew, young and old, is important and here for a purpose. So, when we are told that we are the chosen nation, it's not that we are better or worse than others; we have a specific role in the cosmic reality that defines our world. Every deed has an incalculably positive impact on this world. Therefore, taking it back to our Parsha, when Hashem is telling us in the posuk in the sense of urgency, he is telling us that we must perform these Mitzvos even against our inhibitions because of their impact on this world.

Our intentions, therefore, if we build off what we learn from the Haftorah, should be about our impact and not that we have some rhyme or reason or spirit that may never even be conjured in us. Instead, the actual reason is that Hashem said Tzav! To DO! Added more, even when we don't know the reason, such as with the Chok of Parah Aduma, we still do because it is part of the positive cosmic change we bring to this world by drawing down Hashem's infinite energy.

The reward for this likely doesn't result in monetary loss; rather, the impact is far greater in the general sense than what feels like a loss in the short term.

In conclusion, as the Alter Rebbe tells us, we are the direct cajolers of ushering the Messianic times through our performance of Mitzvos. May we continue to do so with Tzav in this way! And usher in Mashiach now!

Good Shabbos!