



The Daily Portion

PARASHAT TZAV: THE VIRTUE OF ALACRITY

In Parashat Tzav, this week's Torah portion, even before we enter the details of the offerings, one word stands out: tzav. "Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Command Aharon

and his sons, saying..." Generations of commentators pause over this word, tzav, and ask:

Why does the verse not simply say "instruct"? Why not just "say"?

Rashi explains: "Tzav is an expression of urgency, for now and for future generations."

There is a message here for Aharon the Kohen, and in fact for everyone who would follow him, throughout the generations: respond with urgency. Embrace every spiritual task without delay. Many commentators develop from here an entire discussion about zerizut—spiritual eagerness and readiness—as the foundation of all meaningful action. In Mesillat Yesharim, for example, zerizut appears as one of the first stages in a person's inner spiritual growth.

Here is just one paragraph from there on the importance of this quality:

"You will see that human nature is very heavy, for physicality is coarse. Therefore,

a person is not naturally drawn to effort and labor. One who wishes to merit the service of the Creator, blessed be He, must overcome his own nature, strengthen himself, and act with alacrity. For if he abandons himself to his own heaviness, he will certainly not succeed."

PURE PESACH

I would like to send the following message from Israel to the Jewish world:

When we are trying to cope with so many challenges, how can we possibly get ready for Pesach? How do we prepare for Seder night which will be arriving in two weeks and two days? (no stress).

This week I heard an excellent way of thinking about Pesach this year. It will be Pesach distilled to its essence - focused, authentic, and fulfilling.

It's worth focusing on Pesach's main points, studying the mitzvot of the holiday, and learning what halacha requires from us regarding the removal of chametz. Of course, we should also try to support others - financially or emotionally - with their own Pesach preparations, but without taking on other projects that aren't essential in our current circumstances. This is not the time for unnecessary expenses or to add more stress to a daily routine that is stressful already.

But we shouldn't think of this as a miserable Pesach, one that we are forced to keep under trying circumstances. We aren't just

dealing with a worldwide epidemic as we were six years ago during Corona (Covid). This time it's a Jewish story - about our identity, our essence, and our faith. We aren't facing a virus that originated in China and then spread throughout the world, but an evil enemy who has been waking up every morning for decades intent on destroying us.

Think about all the hostages who have returned from captivity and will eat matzah - the bread of liberation - as free men. Think of the pilots who succeeded in eliminating those who "in each generation rise up against us to destroy us" sitting down at their Seder tables. This year Pesach will be a direct continuation of the story of the Haggadah - the story of the exodus from Egypt. While our physical circumstances will be challenging, our spiritual Pesach will be on a completely new level. Pesach this year might be more modest than usual, but it will also be much more meaningful.

May we have an authentic, meaningful, kosher and happy Pesach. ■

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