BS”D

Parshas Tzav

*We should feel great joy in serving Hashem and being close to Him and translate that joy into doing* Mitzvos b’hidur*, Mitzvos in a beautiful manner.*

Doing the Will of G-d

By Rabbi Chaim Zev Citron

The Parsha ends with Hashem commanding Aaron and his sons to “dwell at the entrance of the Ohel Moed (Sanctuary) day and night for seven days” during the Seven Days of Training and Inauguration of the Cohanim.

How could the Cohanim not leave the area in front of the Mishkan for seven straight days? They were human, after all, and had to take care of their bodily needs.

The Ramban based on the Toras Cohanim says that the commandment only applies when they were in the middle of performing the Avoda, the Divine service. In fact, from this passage we learn the prohibition in general of a Cohen not being allowed to interrupt his service.

The Ibn Ezra says that the Torah means, Don’t go out day or night unless it’s necessary. Going out for a bodily need is necessary and is not prohibited. He brings several examples of when the Torah says something happens for so many or so many days, that it doesn’t mean without necessary interruptions. One example: The Torah says that the Jewish people cried after Moshe’s death for 30 days. Obviously, they weren’t crying for 30 days straight. They ate, they slept. But whenever they could, they cried in those 30 days.

In our Parsha, the Torah says that the same rituals that were performed on the first day should be repeated on each of the seven days. Rashi (based on the Talmud Yoma 2b) says that seven days are a prototype for other preparatory periods. The High Priest isolates himself for seven days in preparation for Yom Kippur. The Cohen who is going to burn the red heifer for use in the purification process also isolates himself for seven days beforehand.

The Parsha concludes by saying that Aaron and his sons performed all of the things that G-d had commanded them to do through Moshe. Rashi says that they are being praised for doing just as they were commanded, not deviating to the right or to the left. The Maharal explains that as there were many complex services the Cohanim had to do, the Torah acknowledges that Aaron and his sons meticulously and unerringly performed them.

The Maharal also quotes the Toras Cohanim as explaining that Aaron and his four sons served with joy; although they heard the commandments from Moshe and not directly from G-d, they were filled with joy as if they had heard them from G-d Himself.

The Maharal feels that this is a better explanation. The sages interpret passages like, “So-and-so did what he was commanded” as praising the person for the exact fulfillment of the commandment only when they were commanded to do a difficult task. For example: When the Jews were told as the Egyptians pursued them to go back towards them—a difficult thing indeed—the Torah says, “And they did so.”

Another example: In Parshas B’Haalos’cha, when the Leviim were inaugurated to perform their functions as assistants to the Cohanim, the Torah says that the congregation of Israel did all that G-d commanded of Moshe concerning the Leviim. The Jewish people had worked hard to build the Mishkan. Now their involvement was being curtailed. Only the Leviim would assist the Cohanim, not ordinary Jews. Nevertheless, the Jews did all that Hashem commanded.

Although Rashi and the Maharal espouse different views, I will take the liberty to see them as complimentary.

Sometimes, meticulous observance (Rashi’s interpretation) and joy (Maharal’s) seem contradictory.

When we are involved in detailed and difficult observance of Mitzvot, we sometimes become so involved in the observance that we forget the joy. On the other hand, sometimes we feel happy about our connection with G-d but we become less attentive to the nitty-gritty of doing Mitzvos carefully.

But it shouldn’t be either or. We should feel great joy in serving Hashem and in being close to Him. We should translate that joy into doing *Mitzvos b’hidur*, in a beautiful manner. Every detail is important. Every detail is part of that joyous connection. Do as Hashem commanded; do it meticulously, and do it with joy.

This year after reading Parshas Tzav, we read the Parshas Zachor, that is, the Mitzvah of remembering what Amalek did to us. In Torah Ohr, the Alter Rebbe explains the spiritual meaning of Amalek. Amalek separates G-d’s Name. He separates the first two letters, Yud and “Keyh” from the last two, the Vov and “Keyh.”

The Vov of Hashem’s name represents the six (Vov equals six) attributes or character traits. We should develop these traits especially the first two, love and fear of G-d. We love G-d and want to cleave to Him. As we approach Him, we are stunned by His greatness, realize how far away we are from Him and are awestruck.

Then love and fear come down into action. That is the final letter, the “Keyh” of Hashem’s name. The letter Hey consists of three lines: two connected to each other and one separate. They correspond to thought and speech (which are connected to one another within us) and action with which we affect the outside world. So the love and fear represented by the Vov is manifested through the “Keyh,” i.e., how we actually conduct ourselves.

But love, fear, thought, speech, and deed are not enough. They must be connected to the first letters of G-d’s name, Yud and “Keyh.”

Not only action, but also spirituality, can be self-absorbed and self-centered. (We can even love G-d, but love Him selfishly.) Our love, fear, and action must be grounded in the Yud and “Keyh” which represent self-nullification and selfless devotion.

When G-d’s name is whole, His throne is whole. His majesty then permeates the world.