

PARASHAT TZAV

In the opening pasuk of Parashat Tzav, Hashem instructs Moshe to command ("tzav") Aharon and his sons with regard to the *ola* (burnt-offering) and, later, the other sacrifices. Rashi cites the comment of *Chazal* regarding the term *tzav*, explaining that it denotes *ziruz miyad u-le-dorot* – "urging on, immediately, and for all time." In other words, the Torah indicates that these commands regarding the *korbanot* must be issued with particular emphasis to impress upon the *kohanim* their importance for all time. Meaning, since this area of laws entails a loss of money, it was particularly important for them to be conveyed with a degree of emphasis.

Rav Shimon Schwab, suggests that the *Torat Kohanim* refers here to the phenomenon that arose during the time of the Second Temple. As we know from many prophecies of the *Nevi'im*, the people during the First Temple period were guilty of affording disproportionate importance and value to the *korbanot*, at the expense of other, more fundamental Torah values. The prophets criticise the people's confident faith in the independent power of sacrifices to earn them atonement and divine favour, while allowing themselves to disregard basic laws of ethics and morality. Rather than approaching the *korbanot* as a means of drawing closer to Hashem the people viewed the *Korbanot* with independent value that negated the need for an accompanying process of inspiration and spiritual growth.

From the prophecies of Malachi, who prophesied during the Second Temple period, it appears that his generation had reached the precise opposite conclusion. Having once and for all internalized the message of the First Temple prophets, who sought to lower the people's estimation of the value of sacrifices, the Jews of the Second Temple treated the Temple and its rituals with a degree of indifference, if not disregard. Why, they asked themselves, should money be spent for high-quality sacrifices, if in any event Hashem is more interested in one's thoughts, feelings, and general ethical conduct? If, as the First Temple prophets insisted, the sacrifices lose their value when brought without accompanying feelings of religious devotion, then there is no need – the people thought – to concern oneself with the formal technicalities that apply to these rituals. We might add that Chagai, who prophesied in the early years of the Second Commonwealth, condemned the Jews' laxity in rebuilding the *Mikdash*. It appears that already at that point they had reversed their

attitude from the overly Temple-centric mindset that led to the nation's spiritual decline during the years of the First Temple.

This passage in *Torat Kohanim*, Rav Schwab suggested, refers to this development that occurred during the time of the Second Temple. Moshe is to impress upon Aharon, the *kohanim*, and all *Am Yisrael* the importance of strict compliance with the details of the sacrificial order, *miyad u-le-dorot*, for all time, anticipating the development that would take place many centuries later. When Rabbi Shimon speaks of the concern for *chisaron kis*, the financial loss that may lead people to disregard the sacrifices, he refers to the attitude described above, which sees no purpose in spending money for proper sacrifices, given their secondary status of importance in relation to internal devotion and ethical conduct. The importance of strict obedience to ritualistic details thus requires *ziruz*, constant reinforcement, for all generations. Although it is certainly wrong to focus one's attention entirely on ritual and neglect the general values advocated by the Torah, one must also ensure not to disregard the formal details of Jewish ritual and concentrate exclusively on the Torah's ethical code.

Discussion

1. Which Mitzvot do you feel it's easier to connect to?
2. How can we create a balance in our lives?