

# Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



*The Parasha Letter of The Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital*

Parashat Tzav

פרשת צו

March 26, 201

ט"ז באדר ב' תשע"ו

Torah Reading: *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 6:1-8:36

In this *parasha*, Hashem tells Moshe to describe to the *cohanim* (priests) the rituals for some of the offerings; the *cohanim* then undergo the process of ordination.

As part of the process of ordination, Moshe commands Aharon and his sons as follows (8:33-35):

לֹא וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ, שְׁבַעַת יָמִים--עַד יוֹם מְלֹאת, יָמֵי מְלֹאֵיכֶם: כִּי שְׁבַעַת יָמִים, יִמְלֵא אֶת-יָדְכֶם. לֹד כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה--צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת, לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם. לֵה וּפֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד תֵּשְׁבוּ יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה, שְׁבַעַת יָמִים, וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת יְהוָה, וְלֹא תָמוּתוּ: כִּי-כֵן, צִוִּיתִי.

**33** You shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration be fulfilled; for Hashem shall consecrate you seven days. **34** As has been done this day, so Hashem has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. **35** And at the door of the tent of meeting shall you dwell day and night seven days, and keep the charge of Hashem, that you not die; for so I am commanded.

The *cohanim* spent their entire existence in service to Hashem working closely with the rest of the Jewish people. How paradoxical it therefore seems that a large part of their initiation involved isolation from everyone else in the camp!

Perhaps this was to give the *cohanim* time to reflect in solitude on their upcoming awe-filled profession before they had to assume what must have been a pervasively public persona. Even the most outgoing public servants need some quiet time to attend to their own internal and external needs. These needs must often be fulfilled away from the eyes and ears of the general public; hence the bowling alley, movie theater, and swimming pool inside the White House, for example.

All of us struggle to achieve a balance between the private and public aspects of our lives. At times, we feel the need to take care of ourselves on a personal level, despite any communal obligations we may have. Such moments strengthen us. But all of us, especially communal leaders such as the *cohanim*, must always be aware that the community is gathered outside waiting for us. We can never lose our sense of connection to others and responsibility to them.

This theme of balancing public and private times relates to a similar need to maintain global consciousness and also to focus on immediate communal needs and interests. We grapple with how to respond to tragedies—both natural and man-made—around the world. At the same time, we have also been engaging this past week in our communal celebrations surrounding *Ruach* (spirit) Week, which led up to the festivities of Purim on Thursday and Shushan Purim on Friday. Jews have always sought to balance two disparate events with conflicting sets of emotions (think of breaking a glass at a wedding or *Yom HaZikaron* leading into *Yom Ha'atzmaut*). We encounter this phenomenon on a routine basis, as we live our lives in DC looking over our shoulders at the rest of the world; as we celebrate together *smachot* (celebrations) of births and *bnei mitzvah* at the same time as we mourn together with those who have suffered a loss or are battling disease.

This is not always an easy balance to maintain, but it is one that contributes to the rich tapestry of our lives.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- What other reasons might there be for isolating the *cohanim* before they assumed their duties?
- Can you think of other times in which conflicting emotions might be present? How might you handle that?
- Name three ways we can care for ourselves. Name three ways we can care for others. How do we balance out our needs against the needs of others?