

Command Aharon and his sons. (6:2)

Rashi quotes *Toras Kohanim* that comments, “*Tzav*, the word, ‘command,’ can only be meant to express urging on, *miyad u’le’doros*, for the immediate moment and for future generations. (Furthermore) The Torah must especially urge in a situation where there is a loss of money.” The *Kohanim* sustain a financial loss because they are not paid for their service. In order to perform it, they must be readily available, thus precluding any other form of livelihood. The Torah makes this point within the context of the *Olah* – Elevation/Burnt Offering, because the loss of income in this case is especially significant. With other offerings, the *Kohen* receives both the meat and the hide. With the *Olah*, they receive only the hide. The **Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** adds that the concept of *ziruz*, urging, connected with *zerizus*, alacrity, applies not only when a loss of money is incurred, but, indeed, under any circumstances which entail extreme distress. That extra nudge is necessary, or there is a possibility that one will slack off and look for an excuse to justify his lack of participation.

Zerizus, alacrity, that extra push inherent in *mitzvah* observance, is applicable to all *mitzvos*. Hashem commands us to love Him, “with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your material abundance” (*Devarim* 6:5). Some individuals go all out for *mitzvah* performance, their commitment overwhelming, until it involves their checkbook. Once the *mitzvah* impinges upon their material wealth, they suddenly must “think twice,” or “things are not the way they used to be”; they say anything to circumvent spending their hard-earned money. The Torah teaches us that absolutely nothing should stand in the way of serving Hashem – especially money. One who understands that *zerizus* is not an added aspect to *mitzvah* observance, but the actual *mitzvah*, will slowly, over time, evolve into a person to whom *zerizus* is a natural component of his psyche.

Horav Yehudah Tzadkah, zl, applies this idea in his interpretation of a well-known *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* 5:23. *Chazal* say, “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.” Why does the *Tanna* require an example from the animal kingdom to affirm the various qualities which he proposes a Jew should reflect? Why must one be bold as a leopard or swift as a deer? What is wrong with simply writing, “Be bold, light and strong?” He explains that the *Tanna* is teaching us an important lesson. It is not enough simply to act swiftly, be strong, etc. One must incorporate these qualities into his being to the point that they define him. His swiftness must be natural, his strength and boldness a part of his nature – just as these qualities define the deer, the lion and the leopard. These animals do not require an extra push to be swift, strong, or bold. It is intrinsic to their makeup. They act this way naturally.

The problem is that we confuse the qualities and apply them at the wrong time, such as being in the right place at the wrong time or the wrong place at the right time. **Iturei Torah**, quoted by *Ish L’Reieihu*, offers a meaningful analogy. A businessman was once sitting in the *bais ha’medrash* studying Torah. During this time, a buyer from out of town came to his house with a proposition which would have earned him a considerable profit. When the buyer knocked on the door and discovered that the businessman was unavailable, he decided to go elsewhere, to another source.

When the businessman returned from his study period in the *bais ha'medrash*, his family informed him of his missed opportunity. Naturally, he was quite upset with them for not having informed him of the visitor. "But you were in the *bais hamedrash*," they countered. "You do not worry about that," he said. "If someone comes looking for me – call me!"

Ten weeks later, the IRS came visiting to discuss a number of tax issues with the businessman. Apparently, a few of his accounts were delinquent. As per their father's instructions, they immediately sent him to the *bais hamedrash*. Well, we can imagine the businessman's reaction. "An opportunity for profit materializes and you do not call me, but when the tax collector shows up, you send him to the *bais hamedrash*. Where is your common sense?"

There are *mitzvos asei*, positive *mitzvos*, and *lo saasei*, prohibitive *mitzvos*. We require contrasting attitudes towards the varied *mitzvos*. Concerning *mitzvos asei*, the positive *mitzvos*, one must employ *zerizus*, alacrity, while regarding the prohibitive *mitzvos*, one should act with indolence. Regrettably, we turn the tables, applying alacrity when we are in a rush to perform an *aveirah*, sin; and suddenly we become lazy when a *mitzvas asei* beckons our attention.

A primary component of alacrity is the recognition of the value of every passing moment. One who is slothful does not value the Heavenly gift of "the moment." "If not today – tomorrow" is the attitude of one who has no sense of time and no realization of how much can be achieved in even the smallest amount of time. It was towards the end of 1943, when the blueprint for the opening of *Yeshivas Ponevez* was still on paper. While it was a reality in the brilliant mind of its visionary founder, **Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl**, the *Ponevezer Rav*, it had not yet reached fruition. The *Rav* became seriously ill and his health had reached the critical stage. The doctors were concerned about an infection in his throat, and they absolutely forbade him from speaking.

The *Ponevezer Rav* was noted for an uncanny ability to do what needed to be done whenever the need arose. The time to open the *yeshivah* was now. The fact that he was critically ill and unable to speak should not detract from the focus on what needed to be done – immediately. Indeed, if it did not happen now – it might never open. He quickly wrote a note to his son, *Rav Avraham*, to immediately summon *Horav Shmuel Rozovsky, zl*, and the *yeshivah* should open – now – with whatever students he had been able to assemble at that point. The matter was of the greatest urgency. "Who knows," he said, "if the *yeshivah* does not open at this critical juncture, whether it will ever open."

His vision proved correct. The *Ponovezer Rav* had learned the value of time from his revered *Rebbe*, the **Chafetz Chaim, zl**, to whom every moment was infinitely precious. He was wont to say that the *Chafetz Chaim* merited longevity, not only because the Heavenly Scribe had written him into the Book of Life for a life to exceed ninety years. It was because he valued every moment allotted to him, using it for *tzarchoi Shomayim*, Heavenly endeavors. The *Chafetz Chaim* was extremely frugal, spending only on what he absolutely needed. He viewed money as a product of the time expended in earning it. Thus, something would have to have great significance before he

purchased it. It represented time that he deferred from his Torah study. Therefore, it had better be worth the effort.

Probably the greatest lesson concerning the significance of time is derived from a comment often reiterated by the **Alter, zl, m'Slabodka**, *Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl*, to his son, *Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl*, when he was a very young student in *yeshivah*. In every correspondence to his son, the *Alter* would write, "My dear son! Every endeavor that presents itself; every situation which you confront; every ordeal with which you must contend, think to yourself, 'How would I respond to this issue, if it was the last day of my life, and this was my last decision?'"

We feel that if we do not do it right the first time, we can always return and redo it. It does not always work that way. At best, one will have succeeded - the second time around. If we would know that it is the last day of our life, and everything, all our hopes and aspirations are hinging on what we are about to do, we would act differently. This is how we should live our entire lives.