



## PARSHAT TZAV – SHABBAT HAGADOL

What is the Torah? A book of laws? But what are these laws? Simple commands from infinite, all-knowing G-d to relatively simple man? Yes. But on another level, they are more than this. This is a point brought out by the two meanings of the name of the Torah portion in which they appear: *Tzav*.

*Tzav* means “Command.” It expresses a command from G-d about the donation of offerings in the Sanctuary, relating to the general concept of giving charity. But *Tzav* has also another meaning: “Connect.” It expresses the idea that G-d’s laws establish a connection between the individual and G-d.

Jewish mystical teaching (Kabbalah) makes the point that this connection cannot be taken for granted. G-d is Infinite, beyond all definitions and categories. In comparison with G-d the entire cosmos is smaller than a speck of dust; it is like nothing. And if the vast cosmos is itself like nothing in relation to G-d, what is the significance of a tiny, frail human man or woman?

Yet G-d gives Torah laws to frail human beings. The very fact that G-d has issued a command to the person imparts a sense of significance to that person’s life. He or she is now related to G-d, bonded with Him by a Divine instruction.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that this connection is there even if the person does not actually fulfill the instruction. As the Sages put it, “even though he sinned, he is a Jew.” The fact that the 613 commands in the Torah are addressed to the individual gives that person a significant role and purpose. Of course, this role is properly fulfilled by observance of the commands. Yet the person who does not yet observe them has not lost his role in the system: he still has that connection.

The next step, of course, is to transform the connection into positive action. Indeed, when it comes to a command such as charity, in which one has to give something away, we all need encouragement. The Sages tell us that this is the force of the word “*Tzav*” at the beginning of the Torah portion: to give us encouragement through the generations. The encouragement is the knowledge that through this command of the Torah we are truly connected with G-d.

So, when you donate to charity, or to the upkeep of your synagogue or school, you are also enhancing your connection with G-d.

Shabbat Shalom  
(courtesy Chabad.org)