

Joining G-D's Army

Category: Tzav, Vayikra

In our relationship with G-d, we are sometimes described as a spouse, sometimes as a child and sometimes as a subject. But what does it mean to be G-d's soldier?

When G-d Commands

There are many kinds of relationships in the world:

There is the father/son relationship, the king/subject relationship, the husband/wife relationship, the master/servant relationship... and even the commanding officer/soldier relationship.

Our relationship with G-d encompasses all of the above. Sometimes we are compared to the children of G-d while in other prayers, the Jews are compared to a spouse and so on.

This week's Torah portion is named Tzav, which is an action verb that means command or order. In other words, in this week's portion, G-d, the Commanding Officer, tells Moshe to command or order the soldiers, the Jews, to do what He wants, thus demonstrating the commanding office/soldier relationship.

Throughout the Torah, we usually find the phrases *emor*, "say", or *dabeir*, "speak" when G-d tells Moshe to communicate something to the Jews. But in this Torah portion, for the first time, the expression is "tzav."

In other words, every Jew is in "G-d's Army," in which the mission is to eradicate the evil both in the world and within ourselves.

To Be A Soldier

There are three things that are unique to a soldier:

1. The soldier must know the mission.
2. The soldier must be disciplined—he must obey all orders and not do what he

thinks is right. Only then can he be victorious in war.

3. The soldier must go out to battle with high morale—otherwise, he stands a high chance of being lost in battle.

Now, every military consists of different categories of personnel: sailors, airmen, ground troops and so on. And it's the same in G-d's Army, in which there are three types of soldiers, each with their specific mission.

There is the mission of kindness, symbolized by Abraham. This is called Chesed. Chesed soldiers' primary mission is to help other Jews by giving charity, running charitable organizations, and so on.

There is the mission of prayer, symbolized by Isaac. This is called Tefilah. Tefilah soldiers' primary mission is to be spiritual: to pray, to meditate, to stay close to G-d at all times.

Then there is the mission of Torah study, symbolized by Jacob. This is called Torah, or Limud Hatorah. Torah soldiers' primary mission is to intellectually understand as much as they can, to use the mind to the extent possible. These are Jews who demand reasons for everything—only when they understand the reason do they take any action.

Finish Your Basic Training

Now, for a military to win a war, all divisions of the military are needed—army, navy, air force, commandos, logistics, and so on. If any are missing, the war could be lost, G-d forbid. And so it is with G-d's Army: Every Jew must do his or her part.

Most importantly, every military member must undergo basic training. Even if he becomes an army cook, he still must undergo basic training.

Now, what is basic training in G-d's Army? Not wearing a black hat and speaking Yiddish! Rather, a classic Chasidic saying teaches us that the Hebrew word for soldier, Chayal, is an acronym for Chosid, Yirai Shamayim, Lamdan.

In other words, to be a soldier in G-d's Army is to be a Chosid, a pious person; a Yirei Shamayim, a G-d-fearing person; and a Lamdan, a studious person.

What does being a Chosid mean? A Chosid is one who surrenders his own personal good for the sake of another—and not just materially but spiritually too, like a soldier who risks his own life to help another soldier. So a Chosid is someone who gives of himself for others.

What does being a Yirai Shamayim mean? A Yirai Shamayim is not someone who is afraid of G-d because he is afraid of being punished. That's not fear of G-d—that's fear of punishment. Rather, a Yirai Shamayim is someone who is afraid to disappoint G-d— like a soldier who obeys orders not because he is afraid of being punished but because he doesn't want to hurt the war effort. His country sent him to win the war, not lose it!

Finally, what does being a Lamdan mean? A Lamdan is someone who knows that knowledge is power—that the more you know, the more you succeed. This, by the way, is one of the secrets of the American military: it has a high percentage of recruits who are college graduates, and their knowledge gives strength to the American military. And a Lamdan, of course, knows to share his knowledge with others. After all, the more they know, the more they succeed, too.

So if you want to be a soldier in G-d's Army, be giving, be loyal to G-d, and be studious. In this way, we can win G-d's War and triumph over evil for all time, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days, amen!