

## THE ART OF CONSECRATION

### A Devotional Meditation on Tzav (Command)

Leviticus 6:8-8:36; Jeremiah 7:21-8:3, 9:23-24; Malachi 3:4-4:6;  
Luke 9:57-62; 2 Timothy 2:1-13; Hebrews 7:5-10; 1 Peter 2:1-11

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The most intense period of prayer and Bible study in my life began shortly before my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, when my God invited me to take the commission He had reserved for me. There is irony in that: although I had left active military service, I retained a commission as an officer in the Army Reserve. At the time, I was a civilian employee of the Defense Department. We were just finishing a lengthy project, and about to start another when the LORD's call came. I was also in graduate school, but had hit a wall with my faculty committee on how to proceed with my doctoral dissertation. Each of those commitments required considerable time and energy, as did my roles at home as husband and father, and at church as deacon, Sunday School teacher, and choir member.

Whether I should have been that busy is irrelevant. Compartmentalizing and scheduling commitments is how I live. I have rarely known a time when I was not juggling a dozen commitments. Each one holds the highest priority as I focus on it, and then drops to the background as I focus on the next commitment.

This type of time management works well for projects and jobs, but not so well with relationships. That's why I was struggling to be a good husband and father when my Creator called me into a time of consecration in the spring of 2001. He presented an overview of what He wanted me to do, but no sooner had I accepted than He pulled me into a time of quiet isolation. That's the reason for the lull that settled simultaneously on my civilian job, my PhD studies, and my Army Reserve duties. He wanted me to pay attention to things I had neglected, such as unconfessed sin and unresolved issues that had driven wedges between my wife and me. Only when those issues were identified and set on a corrective course could I begin learning what He wanted to teach – and that required even more isolation.

For the next four years, I had very little time to devote to anything but my God, my family, and my job. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I was called back to active duty in the Army Operations Center. We worked twelve-hour shifts, alternating between days and nights. When I wasn't at the Pentagon, I was at home sleeping, praying, and studying the Bible.

My strange schedule made time with family more precious than ever. I gladly sacrificed sleep for that. What also became precious was interaction with my Creator. I had known since childhood that I would serve Him all my life, but I didn't know until the



*A picture of consecration. Photo by Michael Swan, June 4, 2011, [via Flickr](#).*

fullness of time what He required of me. That's why I had to move through this period of isolated consecration.

We associate consecration with people and things set apart for God's use. It's not something a person decides on a whim. Consecrated people are the ones who answer when called, and who follow through with what is required to prepare them for service. We see the pattern of consecration in the Torah, especially regarding the ordination of Aaron and his sons as Israel's priests:

Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him. So he consecrated Aaron, his garments, his sons and his sons' garments with him. Moses then said to Aaron and to his sons, "Boil the meat at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and eat it there, along with the bread that is in the basket of ordination, as I commanded, saying: 'Aaron and his sons are to eat it' . . . You are not to go out from the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are fulfilled, for he will be filling your hands for seven days. What has been done this day, *ADONAI* has commanded to be done, in order to make atonement for you. You are to stay at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days, and keep *ADONAI*'s command, so that you do not die, for so I have been commanded."

Leviticus 8:30-35 TLV

This was the pinnacle of the consecration process for Aaron and his four sons. They had been in the process for years – long before they realized the Almighty had called them to establish the priestly structure for His Covenant Nation. We could make the case that these men were fulfilling the call initially placed on their ancestor Levi long before he was even born. Fulfillment could not happen, though, until the fulness of time, when Aaron, his sons, and the nation they served were ready.

I am not a Levitical priest, but according to the apostles whom Messiah Yeshua commissioned, I am part of the royal priesthood and holy nation God has redeemed to Himself for His own possession. The Creator established Israel to be His holy nation of priests, living among the nations to proclaim the ways of the Creator to them and help them find the path of His redemption. That mission has never changed. It is a priestly calling that transcends national boundaries, ethnic origins, and doctrinal differences. The unifying factor among this scattered and diverse kingdom of priests is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Who teaches His ways to all who answer His call.

Answering His call is just the first step. The next step is dropping everything else so we can hear Him clearly and be unencumbered to do as He says. Paul explains this using a military analogy:

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Messiah *Yeshua*. No one serving as a soldier entangles himself in the activities of everyday life, so that he might please the one who enlisted him.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 TLV

Not many people are willing to do that, which is why Yeshua explains the consecration process in harsher terms:

As they were traveling on the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

But *Yeshua* said to him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." He said to another, "Follow Me."

But that one said, "First let me go and bury my father."

But *Yeshua* said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Then another also said, "I will follow You, Master, but first let me say goodbye to those in my home."

But *Yeshua* said to him, "No one who has put his hand to the plow and looked back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:57-62 TLV

Our Redeemer doesn't want to compete for our attention and affection. That's why, in the fullness of time, He invites us to come away with Him to be consecrated for His service. It's not just for our sakes that He does this. He wants all people to understand their great value in His eyes, but they can't know that until someone helps them understand. It requires maturity, wisdom, humility, discernment, compassion, and much more to carry out that all-important mission. Seeing people with the Creator's eyes means seeing them as people, not as competitors, enemies, exploitable assets, or objects of conversion. Great learning and life experience help prepare a person for such a role, but only isolation with the Creator at the door of His sanctuary brings the transformation required to step into that role.

This is the process of consecration. It's like art: hard to explain to those who have not experienced it. And like art, the process of consecration is never finished. A fine painting or piece of music seems complete to the observer and hearer, but the artist knows there is always something to make better. In the art of consecration, we continuously make improvements at the Creator's bidding, both to honor Him, and to proclaim His wonders more effectively to His creation.