

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

In this week's Parsha it says

"From twenty years old and older are included in the army" (1:3).

In Ethics of our Fathers, it refers also to age twenty...

BEN ESRIM LIRDUF

This enigmatic statement seems to refer to service in the army. The Maharal expounding on this idea, explains that at the age of twenty a man begins to look past issues at the moment. As lofty ideals and aspirations stir within him, he may desire to impose his will upon others. These character traits may be channeled into service for the community. The Mishna in Avot is elaborating on this idea, specifying twenty as the age of being drafted into the army.

Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch refuses to translate the verse as referring to conscription to the military. Rather the word TZAVA refers to all those who come to "serve" G-d in a peaceful context as written in the text (4:3)

[It shall include] those from 30 to 50

years old, all who enter service (TZAVA) to work in the Ohel Moed.

Rabbi Hirsch defines TZAVA as a large group of people on a joint mission. In the military, one obeys orders, in this case, G-d.

Rambam takes this idea one step further. Though the verse mentioned above is referring to the Levites, Rambam concludes that any other volunteer can also be include (Shmita 13:13). He believes that any person who desires to serve G-d would symbolically be included among the Levites.

In accordance with the previous explanations of the Maharal, only a person at the age of twenty has adequately matured and may make the decision to devote his life to G-d.

The Torah takes us from a slave mentality as was in Egypt to a level of community awareness, the building blocks of a nation, that is more prepared to enter the land of Israel.