

Ki Taitzai 5774

BS"D Parashat Ki Taitzai 5774

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Rules of Jewish Warfare

Our parasha opens with Am Yisrael's army's stunning defeat over the enemy. Soldiers even have the opportunity to consider such peacetime matters as marriage to enemy women.

In contrast, parashat Be'ha'alotcha (Book of Bamidbar) discusses a war which is going very badly, and the Torah directs the kohanim to sound the cha'tzotrot (silver trumpets) as an appeal to HaShem for help. Wherein lies the difference between a clear defeat of the enemy in our parsha and a possible loss of the war in parshat Be'ha'alotcha?

The answer lies in the wording of the two p'sukim (verses).

The "bad" war begins with the words (Bamidbar 10,9):

וְכִי יֵלֶכְתְּ אִתְּךָ אֶל-אֹיְבֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ-אֲדָמָה
וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בָּם וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ

*When you go into battle **in your own land** against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the Lord your God and rescued from your enemies*

The "successful" war begins with the words (Devarim 21,10)

:אֲנִי אֶפְרַיִם אֶבְרָהָם אֶמְרָם אֶמְרָם 'וּ אֶבְרָהָם אֶבְרָהָם אֶבְרָהָם אֶבְרָהָם אֶבְרָהָם

*When you **go out to war** against your enemies and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives...*

If we permit the enemy to do battle with us in our land, as the pasuk says, *“When you go into battle **in your own land,**”* then we are inviting defeat. However, when we **“go out to war”** by bringing the battle into the enemy’s court, then we will be successful.

Lesson #1

The enemy may not enter our land: not a soldier, nor a rocket, nor a missile, nor a mortar shell, nor a tunnel, nor a stray bullet. The reprisal for even one infraction will solicit the fiercest reaction, where symmetrical and asymmetrical statistics and numbers play no role.

When the Enemy is Delivered

The book of Melachim (Kings 1 chap. 20) relates the incidents pertaining to the battle between Achav, King of the northern tribes, and Ben Hadad, King of Aram (today’s Syria).

Ben-Hadad mustered an army led by 32 kings with their horses and chariots, and besieged Samaria, the capital of the northern tribes. After Ben Hadad made impossible demands of the Jewish people, Achav and his generals understood that war was imminent.

A prophet appeared before Achav and announced, “This is what

the Lord says: 'Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

The army of Israel defeated the Arameans. Ben-Hadad escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen, while Achav's army overpowered their horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans.

The prophet returned to Achav with the warning that Ben Hadad would renew the war in the coming year, and Achav would again be victorious.

The following spring Ben Hadad declared war, and this time the Jews inflicted a hundred thousand casualties on the Aramean foot soldiers in one day, and a wall collapsed on another 27,000 Aramean soldiers as they attempted to enter the city of Aphek.

Ben Hadad hid in an underground room, knowing that his chances for survival were nil. But his officers said to him, "Look, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful. Let us go to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life." They sent a message to Achav that Ben Hadad was still alive and is begging for mercy.

Achav received the message and replied, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." And Achav permitted Ben Hadad safe passage back to Aram.

The prophet re-appeared to Achav and said, "You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people".

In the latest round between Israel and Hamas, their military leadership were deep underground trying to escape our bombs.

And although our leaders did not describe them as "our brothers", we permitted these evil men to continue to plan and

Whoever acts with compassion when he should be zealous, will eventually be zealous when he should be compassionate.

The destruction of Jewish homes in Yehuda, Shomron and Gush Katif cries out before the disregard of our political leaders to the mass illegal land grabbing of the Bedouins in the Negev and the illegal building of other Arabs, as in the words of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish "Whoever acts with compassion when he should be merciless, will eventually be merciless when he should be compassionate"

Lesson #3

The unacceptable confusion and distortion of values when man seeks to be more compassionate than the Creator Himself, will eventually lead him to be cruel to those who deserve compassion.

It is the most natural thing for a Jew to return to his ancient homeland. He should be encouraged and helped to settle in any area that the Torah has deemed to be Eretz Yisrael.

A Clear Vision of Right from Wrong

There are other distorted ideas which have cropped up in our religious value system.

The parsha ends with the mitzva of militarily destroying Amalek. If an Amalekite brandishing a sword is advancing to kill you, and all you have in your hand is a Gemara, you will die. But if you hold a sword in one hand and a Gemara in the other, he will surely die.

As much as we love peace, and as much as we desire to devote

ourselves to the spiritual aspects of life, it appears that for the present, that the Creator who has given us the Torah, has other ideas.

To live as if the Mashiach has already arrived where young men learn Torah in tranquility while being oblivious to the Amalekites who surround us; or holding the belief that other young men should give their lives to protect their right to learn in tranquility, all these are distortions of what is required of a young Jew today in Eretz Yisrael.

Lesson #4

HaShem created angels for the heavens to offer praise to HaShem. He also created their counterpart – the Jewish nation – to live a life of Torah in this world, while battling the yetzer hara (evil inclination) on one hand and combatting the evil that men do on the other.

The Ba'al Shem Tov is on record as having said, "I have come to this world to teach people to discern between the essential and non-essential aspects of life".

A clear vision of right from wrong is the greatest gift man can acquire from HaShem.

Shabbat Shalom,

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