



מוכנות טבעית ותשועה ניסית

Preparing for Miracles

■ When You Go Out to War

Not everyone is permitted to go out to fight in Israel's wars. Among those who are exempt, we surprisingly find those who are simply too scared:

מי האיש הירא וְרָךְ הַלֵּב יָלֵךְ וְיָשֹׁב לְבֵיתוֹ ...

*Whoever is afraid and soft-hearted,
should go and return to his home...* (D'varim 20,8)

What does this law teach us about Israel's wars? The answer is found in the beginning of this passage, which directs and guides us how to wage war:

כִּי תֵצֵא לְמִלְחָמָה עַל אִיבֶךָ וְרָאִיתָ סוּס וָרֶכֶב עִם רַב מְאֹד
לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם, כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עִמָּךְ הַמַּעֲלֶה מִצְרָיִם מִצִּרְיָם.

*When you go out to war against your enemy,
and you see many horses and chariots,
and a nation that is greater than you -
do not fear them, for Hashem your G-d is with you,
Who has brought you out of Egypt.* (20,1)

The very first verse of the Torah's instructions regarding war thus emphasizes the supreme importance of strengthening Israel's spirit of faith in Divine miracles and salvation. It tells us that fear of an enemy stems from lack of both faith in G-d and trust in His aid.



On the other hand, in the last verse of this passage, we see Israel making natural preparations for war, precisely as any other nation would:

וְהָיָה כְּכֹלֶת הַשְּׁטָרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל הָעָם וּפָקְדוֹ שָׂרֵי צְבָאוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ הָעָם.

*When the policemen finish speaking to the nation,
they should appoint army heads to lead the nation.* (verse 9)

The phrase “*appoint army heads*” includes everything that a regular army must do: Discipline, training, logistics, battle planning, and whatever else a national army requires.

The combination of these two verses – the first one emphasizing faith and trust in Hashem, and the second one dealing with the required natural preparations – will teach us very much about the correct balance between them. We will learn how best to harmonize between the use of tanks and combat planes and the knowledge that victory is from Hashem.

King Solomon, in his Book of Proverbs, sums up the winning combination:

סוֹס מוֹכֵן לְיוֹם מִלְחָמָה וְלֵה' הַתְּשׁוּעָה.

*The horse [must be] ready for the day of war
- but salvation is that of G-d.* (Mishlei 21,31)

■ Making Natural Efforts

In addition to the above phrase “*appoint army heads*,” we also find additional references in the Torah to the important need to wage war with strategy, logic, and in accordance with the natural rules of warfare.

Verse 1 mentions the fear that may arise when we see “*many horses and chariots, a nation that is greater than you.*” The Sifri, a Halakhic Medrash from the time of the Mishna, teaches as follows:

“Just like they set out against you with horses and chariots, you too shall set out against them with horses and chariots.”

The clear lesson from this Medrash is that if your enemies fight you with advanced weaponry, and you have the ability to acquire and use the same, you may not rely on Divine salvation and use inferior weaponry. We must arm ourselves to the same extent as the enemy! Only if we make the proper efforts, will G-d then come to our aid.

Yet another allusion to this concept is found in the continuation of the same Torah passage. It tells us that in addition to one who is fearful, there are three other categories of men who are exempt from going out to war:



1. One who built a house but did not yet inaugurate it.
2. One who has planted an orchard but may not eat its fruits, as he has not yet taken the fourth-year fruits to Jerusalem.
3. One who has betrothed a woman but has not yet married her.

The very order of this list teaches us something important. The Gemara (Sotah 44a) derives from it how a young man must plan out his life:

R. Shimon said: "The Torah has taught us the way of the world. First one must build a home, then plant an orchard, and afterwards take a wife."

In short, we must plan our lives logically. One must first have a place to live and a base from which to operate. He then must find a way to sustain himself; this is the orchard. Once he is ready to support a family and provide them with security, he is ready to marry. This, in fact, is how the Rambam rules (De'ot 5,11).

The Torah thus repeatedly shows us that we must approach the various challenges we face with our eyes open, logically and rationally.

On the other hand, as we have said, this passage also teaches us that war provides us with an opportunity to rise to great heights in our faith and trust in G-d. The critical issue during wartime is fear. Though such trepidation is quite natural, the Torah forbids us to fear the enemy, even if he is strong and has the advantage over us in numbers, firepower, technology and strategy. When the Glory of G-d walks before us, He fights for us and He rescues us.

■ The Priest and the Policemen

It is the job of the special war-anointed Priest to stand before the Nation of Israel as it goes out to war, and remind them of this. Delivering a fiery speech of inspiration and encouragement, he says:

שִׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל! אַתֶּם קָרְבִּים הַיּוֹם לַמִּלְחָמָה... אֵל יֵרֶךְ לִבְבְּכֶם
אֵל תִּירָאוּ וְאֵל תַּחְפְּזוּ וְאֵל תַּעֲרֹצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם.

Hear O Israel!

*Today, you go out to war ... Let your hearts not be soft,
do not be afraid and do not falter before them.*

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֵהָלֵךְ עִמָּכֶם לְהִלָּחֵם לָכֶם עִם אִיְבֵיכֶם לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם.
*For Hashem your G-d walks before you to fight alongside you
against your enemies, and will save you.* (verses 3-4)



These stirring words must be spoken in Hebrew, the Holy Language, as is fitting for the spirit and soul of the Holy Nation. The Cohen uplifts the people with his speech, and imbues them with a spirit of strength and fortitude to fight in the name of G-d. In the proximity of the Cohen, fear and trembling are unknown.

Nonetheless, it is natural that there are some who are unable to rise to the occasion; they are simply too scared. What of them? For this, the Torah calls in the *shotrim*, the policemen, to take the place of the special Cohen:

וַיִּסְפוּ הַשְּׁטָרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ,
מִי הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרֹדֶף הַלֵּבָב יֵלֶךְ וְיָשֹׁב לְבֵיתוֹ וְלֹא יִמַּס אֶת לֵבב אָחִיו כְּלָבָבוֹ.

*The policemen will [then] say to the nation,
“Whoever is afraid and soft-hearted,
should go and return to his home,
and not soften his brothers’ heart as his.”* (verse 8)

The policemen call out those who are scared and tell them not to go to war. Anyone who is afraid has no business fighting Israel’s wars! This is not merely a benevolent offer to release a soldier from the army and give him some time at home; he is forbidden to fight. One who has not reached the level of absolute faith and confidence in Hashem may not participate in Israel’s non-obligatory wars.

Between them, the Cohen and the policemen give over three messages to the nation. The Talmud (Sotah 43a) explains how this was done:

- The first passage, inspiring the people with faith in Hashem, is spoken by the Cohen.
- The last part, banning frightened soldiers from fighting, was said by the policemen.
- And in between, the three “unfinished starts” - the undedicated house, the uneaten orchard, and the unconsummated marital engagement - are stated by both the Cohen and the policemen; the Cohen tells it to the policemen, who then relay it to the people.

Regarding the three “unfinished” situations, the Cohen and the policemen each emphasize a different aspect. Each situation includes a part that applies to the ideals of the Cohen, as well a part that belongs to the more practical-minded policeman.



For instance, regarding the unfinished house, the Cohen tells the policemen:

מִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בֵּית חֲדָשׁ וְלֹא חֲנָכוּ
יֵלֶךְ וְיָשׁוּב לְבֵיתוֹ פֶּן יָמוּת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְאִישׁ אֲחֵר יַחֲנִכֶנּוּ.

*Who is the man who has built a new house
and not [yet] established it?*

*He shall go and return to his house,
lest he die in the war and another man instate it.* (verse 5)

The word used here for “establish” comes from the same root as the word meaning “educate,” that is, the letters *het, nun, khaf*. The Priest thus emphasizes the importance of education in the home. When one builds a home, he must make sure it is based upon aspects of spirituality: mezuzahs on the doorposts, Torah study, festive mitzvah meals, and the like. In this way, the physical vessel known as a house fulfills its mission as a basis for the spiritual ideal. One who has not yet imbued his house with the ideals of a spiritual home, must return home from the war to do so.

But the policemen, when they repeat this point to the nation, emphasize the matter of “danger.” They explain that one who has not yet dedicated his house must return home “*lest he die in the war.*” That is, the policemen emphasize the dangers facing one who thinks about his house and “someone else instating it.”

Regarding the unfinished vineyard, too, the physical serves as a basis for a spiritual objective:

וּמִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נָטַע כֶּרֶם וְלֹא חָלְלוּ יֵלֶךְ וְיָשׁוּב לְבֵיתוֹ...

*And who is the man who has planted a vineyard
and not [yet] redeemed it?*

He shall go and return to his house... (verse 6)

The word used here for “redeem” (*hil'lo*) comes from the same root as the word meaning “dance” (*maḥol*) to the sounds of a flute (*halilit*). That is to say, the joy of completing a new vineyard is one of thanks for having reached the fourth year and being allowed, finally, to eat of its fruits (by bringing the fourth-year produce to Jerusalem, as the Torah instructs).

The third “unfinished” situation follows the same pattern of a physical base on which is built a spiritual objective:



וּמִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֵרֶשׁ אִשָּׁה וְלֹא לָקַחָהּ יֵלֶךְ וְיָשׁוּב לְבֵיתוֹ...

*And who is the man who has betrothed a woman
and not [yet] married her?*

He shall go and return to his house... (verse 7)

Betrothal is the introduction to marriage in accordance with the laws of the Torah, including *chupah*, the Seven Blessings, and the mitzvah of “*be fruitful and multiply*” – the first commandment issued to the first man, Adam HaRishon.

All three of these examples illustrate the concept of building a home, in its physical, financial, and familial aspects. Whoever was able only to fulfill the physical aspects thereof, but did not attain the spiritual aspects of building a house, planting a vineyard, or betrothing a woman, cannot take part in a non-obligatory war to expand the physical borders of the “house of the Jewish Nation,” the Land of Israel (He is not exempt from obligatory wars, however.)

■ Speaking While Putting on Tefillin

The following example will show clearly whom the Torah regards as the ideal warriors and fighters. They are certainly not mercenaries, criminals, men sentenced to death, or bloodthirsty killers – but rather men on the highest spiritual level.

We know that one may not talk while putting on his tefillin, nor in between putting on the arm tefillin and the head tefillin. Amazingly, the Gemara (Sotah 44b) teaches that if one did speak between the two, this is considered such a grave sin that he must return from the warfront because of it.

This tells us that the warriors of Israel had to be on a very high spiritual and religious level. Only then could they merit Divine aid during war; they would go out to fight their enemies face-to-face, and would return healthy and whole.

But why does the Gemara mention such a seemingly minor law as “one who talks while putting on tefillin”? Could there be a connection between the sin of distracting oneself from tefillin and the other war-exemption situations mentioned here? The answer is yes.

Tefillin, too, are structured according to the pattern we noted above: A spiritual goal built upon a physical base. How so?



The tefillin on our arm is directed to the individual man who is fulfilling the commandment. As is written (Sh'mot 13,9), "*It should be for you as a sign upon your arm.*" For this reason, the arm tefillin must be covered up with one's sleeve; others need not see it.

But the head-tefillin is a different story. It comes to give a message to those around us, and not just to the one wearing it. This is why it must be uncovered, for all to see. As is written:

וְרָאוּ כָּל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וַיִּירָאוּ מִמֶּךָ.

*All the nations of the world will see that G-d's
Name is called upon you, and they will fear you.* (28,10)

The order of putting on tefillin – first the arm, then the head – shows us how to approach our service of Hashem. One must first internalize within himself the concept of G-d's Kingship in the world, as symbolized by the more introspective arm-tefillin. The next step is for him to reach the ultimate purpose: to publicize G-d's Name in every place.

One who speaks between these two stages is essentially showing that there is no continuity, no ultimate goal. It is as if it's not important to him if he completes the entire process of first teaching himself and then the rest of the world.

The same is true of one who has not fulfilled the ultimate goals of his home, orchard, and marriage.

And how is this all connected with war?

The answer is that war, too, is built upon a fundamental layer of physical, mundane preparation and planning – weapons, soldiers, commanders, plans, food, and the like. But atop this level is the higher one of trust and belief in G-d Who will fight against Israel's enemies and help us defeat them. This is the spiritual crown placed upon the material base. Those who see the purpose of the war as detached from the manner in which it is accomplished, may not take part in Israel's wars.

■ Lest He Die in the War

How could it be that after this war passage begins with a demonstration of great faith in G-d, it then ends with the fear that perhaps one might die in battle?



Warfare is unquestionably a life-threatening situation, and all the more so if the enemy enjoys advantages in numbers, weapons, and the like. In such a case, what the nation needs is Divine protection and aid, in order both to win and to come away with no casualties.

The fear of death in war – *“lest he die in the war”* (D’varim 20,5) – begins with the fears of one who has built a house but has not yet established it, and the like. It is clear that one who is overtaken in battle by fears that he will not be able to complete what he began has a low level of trust in G-d. Such a person will not merit absolute Divine protection, and there is then a reasonable fear that he will in fact be a casualty of the war. And then the tragedy could be compounded by the likelihood that someone else will unjustly reap the benefits of his labor - whether by living in his home, eating the fruits of his trees, or marrying his fiancée.

In this connection, let us mention the words of the Sifri on the verse *“lest he die in the war.”* The Sifri says that if “one does not listen to the Cohen, he will end up dying in the war.” The meaning of this is as follows:

One who does not trust in G-d and is afraid, must listen to the Cohen and the policemen, and return from the war front – and if he does not do this, he is told that he will be lacking in Divine protection and will have a fair chance of being killed in battle, and must therefore return home.

This is not at all the case with one who goes out to war with a heart filled with faith and confidence in the G-d of Israel. About him, the Rambam writes:

Whoever fights with his entire heart, without fear, and with the sole intention of sanctifying G-d’s Name, is guaranteed to find no harm, nor will bad overtake him; he will merit to build a proper family in Israel and gather merit for himself and his children forever; and he will merit eternal life in the World to Come, as written (Shmuel I 25,28-29), “G-d will certainly make my lord [David] faithful house, for my lord fights G-d’s wars and evil will not be found with you... and my lord’s soul will be bound in a bond of life with G-d.”

