



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Shoftim

August 21, 2020

## A Taste of Torah Battle Plan

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

Where are battles fought? Of course, they are fought on the battlefield. But life provides many battles to be fought, as well. This week's parsha provides guidance for both types of battles.

The Torah discusses how a war is to be conducted. The first verse begins (Shoftim 20:1), "When you go out to battle against your enemies..." and continues to explain, in detail, the instructions for the Bnai Yisrael when they go out to war.

Strangely, the verse is written in singular form, which begs the question: Aren't the directives being given to entirety of the Jewish People? When a battle takes place, they go in large numbers, not one man alone. Why, then, does the Torah speak in the singular?

Several verses later (ibid.:3), the Torah teaches that before the Jewish People enter battle, the *kohein* (priest) makes a number of announcements to the soldiers, and begins his speech with the words "*Shema Yisrael*," "Hear, Israel." Rashi states that these introductory words allude to the recitation of *Shema*, explaining that the recitation of *Shema* provides enough merit to elicit Hashem's salvation. This seems to indicate that even those who are otherwise unworthy of surviving battle would merit Divine protection through their recitation of *Shema*. Yet, a few verses later (ibid.:8), the *kohein* announces that those who are fearful and fainthearted should turn back from the battlefield. Rashi cites an opinion that this fear is due to the sins a person

may be aware of, which may cost him Hashem's protection in battle. This seems to be at odds with the earlier idea that the mere recitation of *Shema* provides protection – so long as a person recites *Shema*, he ought to be protected, despite his spiritual shortcomings.

The Nesivos Shalom (Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe; 1911-2000) explains that these questions can be answered if we look at the Torah's instructions for battle through a different lens, that of the inner battle each individual faces on a daily basis with his own mortal enemy, his *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). The Torah therefore speaks in the singular, as each person has his own individual battle to fight with his *yetzer hara*.

We know that battle with the *yetzer hara* is simply unavoidable. He is waiting at every corner, ready to pounce and cause a person to sin, and, as with any battle, if one waits for the enemy to pounce, he is no longer in control of the battle. Once one is already in a situation where he is locked in battle with the *yetzer hara*, it is extremely difficult to overcome and emerge victorious. The trick is to be proactive and seek ways to minimize the threat that the *yetzer hara* poses. This idea is alluded to when the Torah uses the expression of "going out" to battle, as one needs to be proactive when fighting the *yetzer hara*, instead of simply engaging in battle when the fight begins.

This line of thought can also answer the question as to why one who is

*continued on back*

### Stories for the Soul

#### All Aboard

At the end of World War I, Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz (1862-1939) traveled by train with his family from Kremenchuk to Poland. Travel was very difficult, as the roads were full of troops returning home. The trains were overflowing with soldiers, too.

Along the way, the train stopped in the middle of vast, open wasteland under Russian control. As more soldiers boarded the train, some passengers disembarked to get a breath of air. Rabbi Leibowitz noticed that a young Jewish girl had done so, too. When the train was about to resume its journey, however, soldiers who had just boarded would not let the Jewish girl reenter the train, claiming that there was no room for her.

When Rabbi Leibowitz saw what was happening, he said to his family, "I refuse to travel any further. We cannot leave a young Jewish woman alone in a place like this!" Immediately, he and his family got off the train to stay with her. The train pulled away. A short while later, a military truck suddenly appeared, halting abruptly in front of them. When the driver heard where they needed to go, he told them that he was on his way there! This was doubly miraculous, as there was little reason for the truck to be travelling in the area, coupled with the fact that the driver just happened to be heading toward their destination, which was quite a distance away.

The section of *egla arufa* in this week's parsha deals with a person found murdered between two towns. The elders of the nearest town must, among other things, affirm that they "did not spill this blood." Our Sages teach that the main thrust of their declaration is that they did not see a traveler in need of care and company and ignore him. The Torah demands that we care for others, especially a vulnerable traveler.

## Kollel Happenings

### KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

### HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

## Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1) Mix up right and left | 4) Six now, three later    |
| 2) Tongue included       | 5) Goliath                 |
| 3) Illusions             | 6) Fruitless for fruitless |

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part XVIII

In Protestant England, many Millenarians believed that a major messianic Christian event was going to occur during their time. Some of these people believed that Jews played a role in this event, and were thus interested in hearing what Rabbi Menashe had to say, even if their religious ideas didn't quite line up with the Jewish outlook.

Others in England viewed allowing the Jews back into their country favorably because of the economic opportunity such a move would provide; Jews were known as successful merchants who could provide a significant boost

to the economy (as had occurred in Amsterdam).

Rabbi Menashe was in touch with theologians in England, some of them quite prominent and influential. He sent a copy of *Mikveh Yisrael* to the English Parliament, with a special preface written specifically for Parliament. This was essentially his petition to Parliament to allow Jews back into England. He also corresponded with Oliver Cromwell, who apparently was interested in allowing the Jews into England.

## A Taste of Torah

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fearful due to his sins may not go out to battle, despite the fact that he has the merit of the recitation of *Shema*.

The Nesivos Shalom explains that *yirah*, fear of Hashem and one's transgressions, can be healthy and productive, or counterproductive. When fear of Hashem motivates us to do better and try harder, we can grow and gain tremendously. However, when it comes from a destructive, anxiety-provoking place, fear can cripple and break us, preventing us from improving and become better people. It is this type of fear that the

Torah cautions against. In the context of the simple meaning of the verse, one who displays the anxiety of sin that will prevent his success in battle must return home, as well, despite his merits. In our personal battles against the *yetzer hara*, this lesson is vital. Despite the many merits one may have, this type of fear will surely cause destruction and devastation.

May we all merit to triumph in this critical battle against our *yetzer hara*, and use our fear of Hashem to continue to propell us to greater heights in Torah and mitzvos.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) Mix up right and left 1:11 s.v. <i>yamin usmol</i> | 3) Illusions 18:10 s.v. <i>mitonein</i>           |
| 2) Tongue included 18:3 s.v. <i>v'halichayayim</i>    | 4) Six now, three later 19:9 s.v. <i>v'yasafu</i> |
| 5) Goliath 20:4 s.v. <i>ki</i>                        | 5) Fruitless for fruitless 21:2 s.v. <i>v'afu</i> |

## Parsha Quizzers - Answers

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