

לעילוי נשמת  
מרת עקא עדנה  
צפורה ע"ה  
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



# עניני ארץ

## ALIEI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

## Strategies of War

כי תצא למלחמה על איבך

*When you will go out to war against your enemies* (Devarim 21:10)

The *Zohar hakadosh*<sup>1</sup> reveals that the war described in Parshas Ki Seitzei reflects man's battle against the *yetzer hara*.

If only whenever we face the *yetzer hara*, we could remember that he is our enemy and the *yetzer tov* is our friend – then the first stage of our battle would be over.

The Chiddushei HaRim quoted the Rebbe R. Bunim who said that in the old days, when Bnei Yisrael waged many wars as a nation, the simple *pshat* of the *parshah* meant a physical war; in *drush*,

it was seen as alluding to the battle of the *yetzer hara*. Nowadays, our primary ongoing war is with the *yetzer hara*, and therefore in our days, that is the *pshat*.

This is difficult to understand. The Torah is unchanging. Since the *pesukim* are describing an actual war and discussing a captive woman (*eishes yefas to'ar*), that must remain the *pshat* for all time. Perhaps it could be said that this is a mitzvah that does not apply today, and only the *drush* of the *milchemes hayetzer* is applicable in our times. But the *pshat* must remain the *pshat* and the *drush* must remain the *drush*. What, then, did R. Bunim mean?

Furthermore, in olden times there was a *yetzer hara* to contend with, no less than today.

The *Chovos Halevavos*<sup>2</sup> tells of a *chassid* who met troops of warriors returning from an intense battle, weighed down with spoils of war. He told them, "You have returned with booty from a minor war. Prepare yourselves for the big war — the war against the *yetzer* and his soldiers." When a man was sent home from service because he was *יָרָא וְיָרָה* – *fearful and fainthearted* (20:8) because of his *aveiros* (Sotah 44a), he wasn't released from battle. He faced

cont. on page 2

## A Short Ride

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק

*Remember what Amalek did to you* (Devarim 25:17)

We are commanded to remember the evil actions of Amalek and wipe him off the face of the earth. Our war against Amalek is not only a result of what he did to us when we left Mitzrayim; it is an eternal war. *Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation* (Shemos 17:16). The reason for this is that in every generation, Amalek, the personification of evil, attempts to bring us to sin. Our parshah reveals Amalek's key tactic: *אֲשֶׁר קָרָה בְּדַרְךָ* – *That he happened upon you on the way* (25:18). We must study this well: to defeat the enemy, one must understand his strategies.

A Yid must always know and feel that he is *בדרך*, on the road. Our existence on earth is transient; we are only passing through. This is where Amalek lays his trap. *אֲשֶׁר קָרָה* means that Amalek cools off (*מקרר*) our sense of *בדרך*. Amalek seeks to instill in us a false sense of permanence, as if we will be around forever.

The *Zohar hakadosh*<sup>3</sup> describes this feeling: "A person goes about this world thinking that the world is his forever, that he is expected to inhabit it for all generations."

cont. on page 3

1 *Zohar Chadash*, 58b

2 *Sha'ar Yichud HaMa'aseh*, chap. 5

# Strategies of War

cont. from page 1

another, more difficult battle: the battle against his *yetzer hara* who schemed to pull him deeper into sin.

The Rebbe R. Bunim says that the *pshat* of the parshah is now about the *milchemes hayetzer*, since that is what we face. However, in the old days they faced the *milchemes hayetzer*, too. If this is *pshat* now, why wasn't it the *pshat* then?

The Chiddushei HaRim adds a word of explanation to R. Bunim's statement: The understanding of *pshat* is what is closer to a person.<sup>3</sup> This remains hard to comprehend; was the battle against the *yetzer hara* distant from them in the olden days?

Tzaddikim said that when a person faces a *nisayon* to transgress or to neglect a mitzvah, he should recite the *pesukim* in which the Torah commands that mitzvah. The power of these *pesukim* can help a person defeat the *yetzer hara*.

The existence of each mitzvah gives power to the *yetzer hara*, enabling him to try and prevent Yidden from fulfilling it<sup>4</sup> – and the *pesukim* of the mitzvot can empower Yidden to withstand this onslaught and hold strong.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, then, R. Bunim means as follows. When the Beis Hamikdash stood and the *Shechinah* rested in Klal Yisrael, Yidden possessed the necessary weapons to battle the *yetzer hara*; on their

*madreigah*, it was not necessary to invoke the *pesukim* for that purpose. Today, however, when we need to receive our fighting power from the Torah's *pesukim* – the closer the *pesukim* align with our situation, the more they will assist us. Therefore, our parshah transformed so that its primary, simple meaning is about the *milchemes hayetzer*. In this way, we can draw the maximum support from it for our battles.

This is very pertinent to the month of Elul, as we seek to free ourselves of the *yetzer hara*. The fact that we read Parshas Ki Seitzei during this time further magnifies the force we can extract from these *pesukim* of *milchamah*.

The *milchemes hayetzer* is a difficult battle, and like any battle, it's all about strategy. The first step is to recognize and remember that we face a mortal enemy, the *yetzer hara*. We cannot afford to lose sight of that.

The pasuk (Koheles 9:14-15) says, עיר קטנה ואנשים בה מעט, ובא אליה מלך גדול וסבב אתה ובנה עליה מצודים גדלים. ומצא בה איש מסכן חכם ומלט הוא את העיר בהכמתו, ואדם לא זכר את האיש המסכן ההוא – *There was a small town with only a few inhabitants; and a mighty king came upon it and surrounded it, and built great siege works over it. Present in the city was a poor wise*

*man who, by his wisdom, saved the town. Yet nobody remembered that poor man.*

The Gemara (Nedarim 32b) explains: A *small town* refers to a person's body and its *few inhabitants* are his body parts; the mighty king that came upon it is the *yetzer hara*; the great siege works he built are the *aveiros* he enticed the person to commit. There was a poor wise man present – the *yetzer tov* – who could save the town. But alas, *nobody remembered that poor man.*

If only whenever we face the *yetzer hara*, we could remember that he is our enemy and the *yetzer tov* is our friend – then the first stage of our battle would be over.

לא תכיר פנים – *You shall not show favoritism* (16:19). Rashi explains, citing Chazal,<sup>6</sup> that even as each litigant makes his claim, the judge may not show softness to one and sternness to the other. He must be equally pleasant and patient with both.

The Sfas Emes<sup>7</sup> comments that this doesn't only apply in the courtroom, but to each individual in his own life. As a person's *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara* make their arguments before him, he must give them each equal treatment; he may not be harsh with one and soft with the other. In this way, the *yetzer tov's* case will be well heard – and hopefully, well received.

(כי תצא תשפ"ג – ס"ג מאמר א)

3 See *Sifsei Tzaddik*, Shelach no. 45 and Shoftim no. 46

4 See *Ibra D'dasha*, *Yerach Ha'eisanim*, p. 101

5 The *ba'alei mussar* taught that in an area where a person finds himself weak, he should study the halachos in depth, as this empowers the *yetzer tov* in this area. However, this can work only as an offensive strategy. When a person is in the thick of a *nisayon*, he doesn't have time for in-depth learning; he needs an arrow to shoot at the *yetzer hara* right now. That arrow is the pasuk of the mitzvah which he can recite.

6 Shevuos 30a

7 Shoftim 5634 s.v. *Shoftim* (at end)

cont. from page 1

With this mindset, the *yetzer hara* can bring a person to the worst of sins.

A person who does not yield to this erroneous mindset – who feels keenly that life is not forever, and that it’s only an opportunity for growth in *ruchniyus* – is not easily swayed by the *yetzer hara*.

Let us illustrate this idea with a *mashal*:

A man boards a train for a journey of several hours. He finds his seat in the

A person who feels keenly that life is not forever, and that it’s only an opportunity for growth in *ruchniyus* – is not easily swayed by the *yetzer hara*.

appropriate cabin, but first, he withdraws from his valise several cans of paint and polish, paintbrushes, and some brand-new drapes. He immediately sets to work decorating the cabin; after all, he’ll be spending time there. Only once the walls are gleaming in a fresh coat of paint, the windows have received a new dressing, and the floors shine from polish does the man at last wipe his brow, take a long drink of water, and settle into his seat. Three minutes later, the train slows into his stop.

*Fool! Why waste your time, energy and money on such a short journey? You’d do much better to decorate your own house, where you spend most of your time.*

We can say the same of ourselves. When we consider the length of our lifespans against eternity, the *maschal* of a train ride can hardly describe the fleetingness of our lifetimes. And yet, we invest so much time, vitality, and resources in our brief commute.

The *Mishnah Berurah*<sup>9</sup> cites the *Sefer HaChinuch*, who lists the six constant mitzvos that a person should fulfill every moment of his life. They are: 1. Belief in Hashem; 2. Rejection of any belief in *avodah zarah*; 3. Acceptance of Hashem’s Unity; 4. Love of Hashem; 5. Fear of Hashem; 6. Not straying after one’s heart and eyes. The *Chinuch* concludes with a pasuk in Parshas Matos (Bamidbar 35:13) which symbolizes this idea: *שש ערי מקלט – You shall have six cities of refuge*.

In Parshas Shoftim, the Torah once again discusses the *arei miklat*, saying, *תכין לך הדרך ושלשת את גבול ארצך – Prepare the road for yourself, and divide into three parts the boundary of your land* (19:3).

Since the *arei miklat* are for murderers to seek refuge in, why doesn’t the Torah say *תכין לו הדרך*, *prepare the road for him*, i.e. the murderer? What is meant by *תכין לך*, *prepare for yourself*?

Perhaps this pasuk, too, is alluding to the *miklat* of the six constant mitzvos. The Torah is expressing that *תכין לך*, *if we prepare for ourselves* by fulfilling these mitzvos, it will be easier for us to remember that we are *בְּדֵרֶךְ*, *sojourners on the road of life*. The constant practice of

these mitzvos counteracts the incursion of the *yetzer hara* when he seeks to make us forget the transience of this life.

The habit of pondering these mitzvos means that when one is not learning Torah, he can focus on these ideas, thus instilling in his consciousness that *Olam Hazeih* is only a corridor before *Olam Haba*.

This is our *avodah* during these days of Elul. The Chiddushei HaRim<sup>10</sup> finds an allusion to Elul in the pasuk (Tehillim 100:3), *הוא עשנו ולא – He made us and we are His, His people and the sheep of His pasture*. The word is read *וְלו*, but is written *וְלוֹ*, with an *alef* – which gives the meaning, *He made us and we did not*. The words *וְלוֹ* and *לוֹ* together spell *אלול*. The Chiddushei HaRim explained that the more we internalize *וְלוֹ*, the more we achieve *וְלוֹ*.

As this teaching is generally understood: One who recognizes *וְלוֹ*, that he has no existence or significance independent of Hashem, merits *וְלוֹ*, coming close and belonging solely to Hashem.

The Sfas Emes, however, argues that the concept of man’s insignificance without Hashem is so obvious that only a fool could think otherwise. That cannot be the *madreigah* this pasuk is referencing. Rather, *וְלוֹ* means that our creation was not for our own sake, but for the service of Hashem – *וְלוֹ*. We are set in a brief journey through this world to do battle with the *yetzer hara* and bring Hashem *nachas ruach*.

Internalizing this lesson of *וְלוֹ* – is vital as we prepare for the coronation of Hashem on Rosh Hashanah.

(בנאות דשא – כי תצא תשפ"ג)

<sup>9</sup> *Siman 1, Be’ur Halachah*

<sup>10</sup> See *Likutei HaRim*, Elul s.v. *Remez*

את בתי נתתי לאיש הזה לאשה

*I gave my daughter to this man as a wife*

(Devarim 22:16)

The Mishnah (Kesubos 22a) states that if a woman claims she was married and then divorced, she is believed, because “הפה שאסר הוא הפה שהתיר” – the mouth that forbade is the mouth that permitted.” Since we know she was married (and thus forbidden) only from her own statement, when she makes another statement that she was divorced, she is believed. The Gemara learns this from our pasuk.

The Rishonim<sup>11</sup> disagree whether the woman’s statement that she was divorced must follow within the timespan of *toch k’dei dibbur*: Rabbeinu Yonah maintains that it must, and the Ramah holds that it does not need to.

The *Machaneh Ephraim*<sup>12</sup> explains this disagreement as depending on how we understand the principle of *peh she’asar*. Rabbeinu Yonah understands that since the woman could have said nothing and would not have been considered forbidden – and yet she said that she had been married, it is clear she is telling the truth when she says she was divorced. This is a form of *migu*. Therefore, as with any *migu*,

a follow-up claim cannot be made at a later time; it must be stated *toch k’dei dibbur*.

The Ramah, however, maintains that *peh she’asar* works because “מפיה אנו חיים” – from her mouth we live,” meaning that since our knowledge of her marriage comes only from her, we must accept whatever she subsequently says about it, as well. If so, her claim of divorce need not be made within *k’dei dibbur*.

The *Tumim*<sup>13</sup> disagrees with the *Machaneh Ephraim*, and asserts that even if *peh she’asar* works as a *migu*, the claim of divorce could still be made after *k’dei dibbur*. The rule that a subsequent claim of a *migu* must be made within *k’dei dibbur* is only when it is a new claim, independent of the initial claim. But when it is made as an explanation of what was originally meant, it is accepted even after *k’dei dibbur*. If so – says the *Tumim* – when the woman claims she was divorced, it is not a new claim, but an addendum to the first claim. She is explaining, “I was married but then divorced.” Accordingly, even if *peh she’asar* operates as a *migu*, this statement can be made after *k’dei dibbur*.

The different understandings of the *Machaneh Ephraim* and the *Tumim* can have the following practical ramification.

The *Chemdas Shlomo*<sup>14</sup> considers: following the opinion that a *peh she’asar* need not be within *toch k’dei dibbur*, would we believe a woman who first said she was married, and later claimed to have subsequently gotten divorced?<sup>15</sup>

If we follow the *Tumim*’s understanding (that even if *peh she’asar* works as a *migu*, a claim of divorce could be made after *k’dei dibbur* since it is only an addendum to the initial claim of marriage), then where the woman says that her divorce occurred after her initial claim of marriage, she will definitely not be believed from a standpoint of *migu*. A follow-up statement of a *migu* cannot be made after *k’dei dibbur* if it is a new, independent claim – and this woman’s statement of divorce is a new claim, separate from her first claim of marriage. Thus, it cannot be made after *k’dei dibbur*.

However, following the *Machaneh Ephraim*, the Ramah maintains we believe a *peh she’asar* because *m’pifah anu chayim* – and perhaps the fact that we know of her marriage only from her would be sufficient grounds to believe that she was divorced, even if the divorce is said to have happened after she notified us of her marriage.

(בנאות דשא – כי תצא תשפ"ג)

11 Cited by the *Tur*, E.H. 152

12 *Hilchos Issurei Biah*, 18

13 *Klalei Migu*, se’if kattan 109

14 *Chiddushim*, Kesubos 22a

15 See *She’elos U’Teshuvos Avnei Nezer*, C.M. end of no. 120; Maharit Algazi, *Bechoros* 5:49; Meiri, Kesubos 22a s.v. *Kol mah*