



Bet Horaah

בית הוראה

Shaarei Ezra

שערי עזרא

Parshat Pekudei

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 6:45pm

Shabbat ends: 7:45pm

R"T 8:17pm

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STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL: LESSONS FROM PURIM AND TORAH LEADERS.

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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We have previously discussed the difference between Chanukah, where the Maccabees took up arms to defend their sovereignty, and Purim, where the Jews relied on prayer without engaging in physical defense. Today, we will delve into that topic again, י"ח.

While almost every sensible Jew supports the war against the terrorists and enemies, conflicting statements in Chazal require clarification for a clear understanding of the Torah's approach.

The Importance of Non-Resistance Against Aggressors.

Chazal (תנחומא ויצא ה') tell us that during hard times of crisis, when a vicious enemy tries to harm us, we should not fight in the heat of the moment. Instead, we should let the situation be, and eventually, it will pass. However, those who stand against them and fight often end up being defeated. There are numerous examples in history, some of fighting and some of not fighting enemies, which clearly demonstrate that whenever we fought an enemy or stood against them, we were bitterly defeated. Conversely, whenever we chose to shy away or avoid direct conflict, we were able to survive. While fighting and standing against them often brings devastating results, using methods of hiding or escaping usually saves the person.

The prophet cried out: "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers ... hide yourself for a little moment" (ישעיה כו, כ). Hashem declared: I told you to restrain yourselves and to surrender to the conditions that prevail at the moment.

Midrash (מדרש תנחומא ויחי סימן ה') brings few examples from Tanach (מלכים א כא):

Navot owned a vineyard next to King Ach'av's palace. Ach'av wanted Navot's vineyard to expand his own property and offered to buy it or exchange it

for another vineyard. However, Navot refused because the land had been passed down to him from his ancestors and he did not want to give it up.

Ach'av was deeply upset by Navot's refusal and went home in a sulking and depressed mood. His wife, Queen Izevel, saw his distress and asked him

what was wrong. When Ach'av explained the situation with Navot's vineyard, Izevel took matters into her own hands. She forged letters in Ach'av's name, ordering the leaders of Navot's city to falsely accuse Navot of cursing Hashem and the king. This led to Navot being stoned to death, and Izevel told Ach'av that he could now take possession of the vineyard.

From here, we see the devastating results of Navot's refusal to compromise

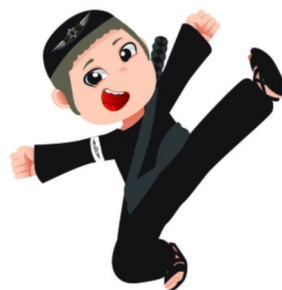
(when Ach'av demanded his land), and so it is written about him: "Navot was stoned, and is dead".

Mordecai, in refusing to bow down to Haman, chose not to temporize or compromise his beliefs. This defiance nearly led to the destruction of the nation of Israel, as Haman sought to annihilate the Jewish people in response.

On the other hand, David fled and escaped from Shaul, and he also fled from Avshalom his son.

King Shaul sought to kill David, who was anointed as the next king of Israel. David, rather than fight against Shaul, chose to flee and avoid direct confrontation, as he respected Shaul's position as king. Later, when David's own son Avshalom rebelled against him and sought to take the throne, David again chose to flee in order to avoid a bloody conflict within his own family. These instances demonstrate David's wisdom in avoiding unnecessary confrontation and preserving life.

Avraham relied upon Sarah when he was at risk of being killed and asked her to say she was his sister to save himself. Yitschak demeaned him-



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self before Esav, as is said: "And Yitschak loved Esav" (בראשית כה, כ). Similarly, Yaakov fled from Esav, as it is said: "Yaakov fled into the field of Aram" (הושע יב, יג).

Moshe did likewise, as it is said: "He fled from Pharaoh" (שמות ב, טו).

This approach was taught by our sages, who demonstrated how one should handle times when a wicked person harasses you. They've learned this from the story of Rabbi Akiva, who recounted an incident where his boat capsized, and he found himself in the sea, struggling for his life not to drown. In this desperate moment, he managed to grab onto a wooden board to stay afloat. However, the constant high waves still threatened his life. Rabbi Akiva found a way to survive by lowering his head under the water, allowing the waves to pass over him safely. This clever and resourceful act saved his life amidst the perilous sea.

The Gemara concludes by saying that we learn from this that whenever wicked people come to harass you, you should follow Rabbi Akiva's example and lower your head, not standing against them directly. This is the method of survival.

Our sages and rabbis throughout the generations have always warned to behave in such a way: to accept the exile until Hashem redeems us and not to fight back against the oppressors.

The holy Chafetz Chaim writes on the pasuk: (דברים ב, ה) "אל תתגרו בו". The Midrash says: "If you see Esav, seeking to provoke you, do not stand against him, but hide yourselves from him.

"The Torah teaches us not to confront the nations even when they provoke us. We should follow in the footsteps of our father Jacob in his battle with his brother Esav. As the Ramban explained in Parshat Vayishlach, there is an allusion here for all generations: everything that happened to our father with his brother Esav will always happen to us with the descendants of Esav. It is fitting for us to follow the path of the righteous, preparing ourselves for the three things he prepared himself for: prayer, charity, and escape through war, to flee and escape, etc.

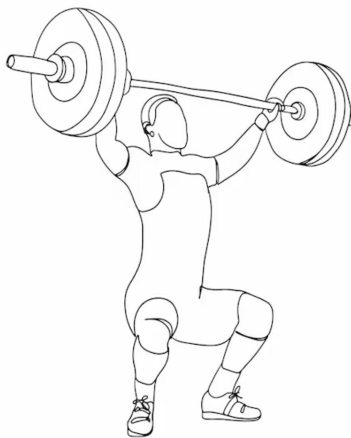
"And behold, as long as we have followed this subjugation Hashem have saved us from their hands. But since we have strayed from our path and adopted new ways, abandoning the weapon of our father and grasping the weapon of our enemies, we have walked haltingly and found many evils and troubles."

There are many more examples of the same, and therefore the obvious conclusion should be that whenever we are terrorized by neighboring terrorists, we should not respond but rather maintain silence, as responding can only worsen the situation.

Standing Up to Defend Our Sovereignty and Dignity.

On the other hand, we have exactly opposite instructions as the Torah divides Jewish wars into two parts: a voluntary war, a mitzvah war which is an obligated war. A voluntary war is to expand our borders, while mitzvah wars are those we were commanded to wage when we conquered the land of Israel and the war

against Amalek. Also, war against an enemy that comes to attack us is considered a mitzvah. This is written in the Torah (פרשת) and the Rambam (הלכות מלכים פרק ה') expounds on it. Now, how can there be a mitzvah or even voluntary war when the correct approach according to the sources we mentioned above is to be submissive and surrender to our enemies' aggression?



Add to that an open and clear halacha שולחן ערוך (סימן שכט ס"ו) that when there is a possible attack on a Jewish establishment such as a city or village, we must violate the Shabbat and go help them defeat the enemy. Again, we see that the Torah obligates us to stand against those who come to fight us.

We all familiar that Yaakov Avinu prepared for three things before meeting Esav, one of which was to prepare for war (רמב"ן וישלח לב, ט). Surprisingly Chazal did not rebuke him for this, unlike other leaders such as Mordecai as mentioned before. On the contrary, our sages said that we should learn from Yaakov's way of preparing when meeting an adversary. What's the

difference?

Assessing the Situation and Acting Accordingly.

The obvious answer is that we always have to assess our abilities. In a place where we are few and fighting back will only bring more harassment and aggression, of course, we should avoid doing so and 'swallow the bullet.' But once we are able to defeat the enemy, we must do so. To better explain this, we need to differentiate between when we were in exile, where we didn't have the capabilities to fight back since we were few and defenseless; then we must surrender and save whatever we can. However, whenever we have our own country and an army, we must not allow others to threaten our existence and sovereignty, lest we be repeatedly attacked.

We find this very same idea in the Gemara (מגילה ו, ב) which discusses two contradictory statements. In one statement it says in the name of Rabbi Yitzhak: "If you see a wicked man whom the hour is smiling upon, i.e., who is powerful and victorious, do not provoke him, as it is stated: 'Contend not with evildoers' (תהלים לז). And not only that, but if you provoke him, his undertakings will be successful, as it is stated: 'His ways prosper at all times (תהלים י).'"

On the other hand, Rabbi Yochanan said: "It is permitted to provoke the wicked in this world, as it is stated (משלי כח): 'They that forsake the Torah praise the wicked; but they who keep the Torah contend with them.'"

After suggesting a couple of answers, the Gemara concludes that there is a difference: when a wicked person has fortune on their side and is powerful, one should not fight them to avoid being defeated. However, if a wicked person is not favored by fortune and is vulnerable, then we should confront them for their cruelty.

JEWISH LIONS: ROARING THROUGH HISTORY.

One of the more famous symbols of the Jewish army is that they are referred to as lions. There are drawings of lions in soldier uniforms and songs that liken the Jewish people to lions and lion cubs. Is this rooted anywhere in our sources, or is it merely a parable?

The Ramban deals with this idea and writes (במדבר ח, יח): "It is known that Israel are valiant and courageous in battle, for they are likened to lions and wolves that seize prey, and they conquered the kings of Canaan in battle." Where did the Torah liken the Jewish people as such? There are a few places. One is within the last blessing of Yaakov before he passed away to Yehuda, saying (בראשית מט, ט): "A lion cub is Yehudah; from the prey, my son, you elevated yourself. He crouches and lies down like a lion and like a lioness."

Jews are called Yehudim after the tribe of Yehudah because most of us are indeed from the tribe of Yehudah.

In the days of Rechavam, the son of Shlomo, the kingdom split into two: Israel and Yehudah.

Israel was exiled by Assyria about 150 years before Yehudah, and since most of the tribes of Israel served idolatry, they assimilated. But there are deeper explanations as to why we are named this way. In Parshat Vayechi, when Yaakov blesses his children, he blesses Yehudah as follows: "Yehudah, you are the one whom your brothers will acknowledge". Yehudah received that name upon his admission to his failure with the Tamar episode; יהודה therefore, we received his name since we follow his courage in being able to stand up to very hard tasks.

Yonatan ben Uziel translates it as: "Yehudah, you are the one whom your brothers will acknowledge for the deed with Tamar; therefore, your brothers will call themselves Yehudim after your name,".

Indeed, when Pharaoh appointed midwives to assist in the births of Jewish women and take care of the babies, the verse calls them "Hebrew midwives," but the Targum Onkelos changes those words and translates it as "Jewish midwives." The reason seems

to be, in accordance with the explanation before, that the Hebrews were called Jews right away, especially those who sacrificed themselves with courage, as Yehudah did, and for that, he received that name.

This explains well why Yehudah was referred to as a lion, as lions are courageous animals, and the resemblance to the Jewish people with the same bravery and courage.



Another source that the Jewish nation symbolizes lions is written in the prophecy of Bilam, who spoke about Am Israel (במדבר כד, ט): "He crouched and lay down like a lion and like a lion cub."

Chazal (חגיגה יג, ב) call the lion the king of the animals because the lion represents several traits of a king. For example, the lion embodies

bravery. This is why the Shulchan Aruch (הלכה א, א) opens with instructions to "wake up as a lion," meaning that one should have the courage to overcome the desire to keep sleeping משנ"ב (שם). The lion also does not fear other animals. The Gemara ב"ק (טז, ב) says that all animals kill their prey before eating it because they are afraid it might fight for its life, But the lion, being the king of the animals (רא"ש שם), eats its prey before killing it because it isn't afraid. Everyone is afraid of the lion, as the pasuk says (עמוס ג, ח): "When a lion roars, who isn't scared?"

This resemblance to the nation of Israel is striking, as they are known for their courage and lack of fear in the face of adversaries.

The wars of Israel are evidence of that courage which astounds all the nations. From the wars against the Babylonians during the first temple period to the Romans during the second temple period, we have seen breathless courage displayed. This legacy continues until this very day. We witnessed extreme courage and bravery during the War of Independence, and despite beliefs that our generation is weak and spoiled; we displayed even more bravery than ever before at the last war.

IS A KOSHER MEGILLAH NECESSARY?

Many wonder why some people have a kosher Megillah scroll if they're going to hear the Megillah reading from the Baal Kore'. The simple answer is that if one indeed listens attentively and can hear every word from the Baal Kore', they may not necessarily need the physical scroll of the Megillah. The problem arises when one misses a word due to noise, tiredness from the long day, sitting too far from the Baal Kore', or any other reason. Sitting far from the person reading is particularly common among women, who are also obligated in the Mitsva of Megillah just as men are.



they may not have fulfilled the Mitsva of Megillah reading (רשב"א (סימן תסז ור"ן מגילה יח, א). The remedy for such a scenario is to read from the Chumash that one has in front of them and then read until they catch up with the Baal Kore'. Doing it this way will be considered as if they heard the Megillah, but only Bedieved. However, many people can't catch up with the Baal Kore', in which case they may not fulfill the Mitsva at all. To avoid such a situation, one can have a kosher Megillah and follow along. They may then either read it in a whispering sound or

If one missed even one word from the reading of the Baal Kore', read just the word they missed and catch up with the Baal

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Kore'. In both cases, they would fulfill the Mitsva properly. Therefore the Mishna Brura (סימן תרפט ס"ק יט והגר"ע יוסף בחזו"ע) (פורים עמוד עט) says that one should try to have a kosher scroll Megila.

Another advantage of owning a kosher Megillah is that you can recite the bracha yourself, rather than hearing it from the Baal Koreh (בן איש חי תצוה הלכה יא חיד"א בברכי יוסף סימן רצה סק"ה). When saying the blessing over a kosher Megillah, one should have the intention in their heart not to fulfill the blessing they hear from the Baal Koreh.

The Beit Yosef (סימן תרצ) from the Rashba (ת"א סימן תסז ותשכז) explains that while one who holds a Chumash should not read from it, as he may attention to his reading which isn't kosher rather than hearing it from the Baal Koreh, someone who holds a kosher Megillah may read it quietly to himself while the Baal Koreh reads it aloud.

Can an Ashkenazi hear the Megillah from a Sephardi, or vice versa? The poskim permit this, since the Megillah may even be read in languages other than Lashon Hakodesh (גרי"ש אלישיב ספר (יבקשו תורה עמוד קל חזו"ע עמוד פ ותשובות והנהגות ח"א סימן תא)). However, this reading is considered bedieved (חזו"ע עמוד פ ותשובות והנהגות ח"א סימן תא). Therefore, if one finds themselves in such a scenario, they should quietly read from their own Megillah in order not to interrupt others while the baal koreh is reading with their syllable.

Another issue with following from a Chumash is that people tend to 'space out' or 'dream' during part of the reading since it is so long. The Poskim (גרי"ש אלישיב באשרי האישי פרק מג ה"ז) write that by doing so we miss hearing some words which then we won't fulfill our obligation.

At some large shuls, they use a microphone when reading the Megillah to ensure everyone can hear the reading. However, there is a machloket among authorities regarding whether hearing the Megillah through a microphone is considered valid. Therefore, someone who must be at such a place should also read along from a kosher Megillah.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (הליכות שלמה פרק יט ה"ד) pointed out that during the reading, there are portions where the congregation reads loudly ahead before the baal kore, who then repeats those sections. The rabbi suggests that one who is reading from a Chumash must intend not to fulfill their obligation through this reading, as it would then be considered as if they read from a non-kosher Megillah, but instead wait to hear it from the baal kore'. Thus, reading from a kosher Megillah would resolve this issue.

Needless to say, the Megillah comes in very handy for those who can't go to shul. For example, if one doesn't feel well or lives in an area without a reading, or if one missed the reading for some reason. This is especially relevant for women, who may sometimes give birth and don't have anyone to read for them. In places where they can't make it to the reading, their husband can read it for them.

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