

Dvar Torah

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KI TEITZEI

"When you go into battle against your enemies, G-d will deliver them into your hands, and you will capture them." (21:10)

After a Jewish soldier returns from battle, he understands very well that his victory was granted by G-d and not to his military prowess. The classic commentary on the Bible, the Kli Yakar points out that the word "your enemies" in the verse is stated in the plural - O-Y'VECHA, while "deliver him into your hands" is singular.

This seems to imply that the soldier was facing two enemies. Who was this second adversary?

The Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Efrayim Luntschitz 1550-1619, Prague) identifies this second enemy as the YEITZER HARA - the Evil inclination. Even the Torah allows certain surrenders. The Rabbis point out that the whole story of the captive beautiful woman is a concession to man's evil inclination, allowing him to even marry her. How could this soldier cave into his desires?

Furthermore, in last week's parsha the Torah states all those who are

pardoned from going into battle. Rabbi Yossi in Talmud Sotah (44a) explains that this includes all sinners are pardoned from battle, leaving only the righteous. So how could such righteous soldiers be tempted by such evil inclinations? Rabbi Y. Kristt felt that the answer can be found in Yaakov's prayer to G-d before his meet with Eisav. In Parshat Vayishlach (B'reishit 32:8), the Torah describes Yaakov's fear of encountering Eisav. The Torah uses two words to connote fear VAYIRA - afraid and VAYEITZER - distressed. Rashi explains Yaakov's two concerns: he feared being killed and also having to kill others. Yaakov feared that having to kill someone else in battle would have a negative impact on a person's soul. Even though there are times when we must fight a war, nonetheless we must be wary of its negative impact. Similarly, in our parsha, even the righteous soldier must be wary of the YEITZER HARA.

This lesson is applicable in our daily lives. Often, we are forced into situations where we may have to perform actions that seem contrary to Torah ideals, if not its laws. While permission may be attained, and might even be the preferred option, we still must engage in internal introspection, both before and after the event, to evaluate its effect on us.