

SHOFTIM

**BATTLE OF THE MIND,
BATTLE OF THE HEART**

Shema, Tefillin, and War

A

Prepare for War

The *parsha* discusses the preparations when the Jewish people goes to war against an enemy. As they approach the battlefield, the *kohen* speaks to the people. He says to them, “*Shema Yisrael atem kreivim hayom al oiveychem*. Listen Israel you are approaching a battle with your enemies.” Don’t let your hearts be weak, don’t feel afraid, broken or worried by the battle you are about to enter. Hashem your God walks with you. He will help you defeat your enemies and will save you.

Rashi notes that these words, “*Shema Yisrael*,” are the first the *kohen* says. He comments that even if all we have is the merit of *kriyas shema*, it is enough for Hashem to save us. Why is this particular *mitzva* of *kriyas shema* so special that it helps the Jewish soldiers defeat their enemies in battle?

In Maseches Brachos 14, the Gemara writes that if somebody says *kriyas shema* without wearing *tefillin* it is as if he is relating false testimony against himself. The simple way of understanding this is that the *parsha* of *kriyas shema* says we should wear *tefillin*.

Such a person is saying, “I should wear *tefillin*,” but he does not do so. This is a hypocritical statement. He thus makes a false statement about himself and his commitment to Torah.

This simple interpretation of the Gemara is difficult. The *shema* also contains the *mitzva* of placing a *mezuzah* on the doorpost. If a person would read *shema* and not have a *mezuzah* on his doorpost, he would also be presumably a false witness and a hypocrite. Why doesn't the Gemara also mention the *mezuzah*? Why does it mention specifically the *mitzva* of wearing *tefillin*?

B

Shema Sandwich

Shem Mishmuel cites Psachim 45b. The Gemara relates that the people of Yericho had three customs the rabbis objected to, and there were three other customs that they did against the will of the Sages but to which the Sages did not object. One of this second set of customs was that they would *korchin es shema*. This means they bundled up *shema* in a way the rabbis didn't like. The Gemara explains that the first sentence of *shema* says, “*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad*. Listen Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is one.” The next *pasuk* is, “*V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha*. Love Hashem your God with all your heart.” These are two distinct verses. Someone who reads *shema* properly will pause after the word *echad*, and then continue reading the next sentence. The people of Yericho would read *echad v'ahavta*, “Hashem is one you should love Him,” together without pausing.

The Gemara says that nowadays we insert the verse “*Baruch shem...*” between these first two verses. The people of Yericho didn't say that, either. What was their idea behind running these two sentences together? Since they essentially mispronounced the last word by not pausing, why didn't the *chachamim* stop them?

Higher Energy

Shem Mishmuel explains this in a fascinating way. As we have discussed in previous essays, every person has *sechel* and *lev*, mind and heart, intellect and emotion. The first *pasuk* of *shema* is a statement of fact, an idea that Hashem is one. There are not many gods. God is the only one. This is an intellectual concept. The next sentence, though, “*V’ahavta*, You should love Hashem,” is different. This verse speaks of an emotional drive. The first two verses teach us two different things: to have an intellectual understanding of Hashem, and to make a total emotional commitment to serve Him.

This double focus on the intellectual and the emotional, is a feature of humanity that reflects the world as a whole. We have a concept that the human being is an *olam katan*, a miniature universe reflected within man and woman. Within the universe, we know that there are two levels of reality. The first level is spiritual; though we don’t perceive it with our physical senses, we know it is there, we have a spiritual feeling that heaven exists. There is also our physical world, which we do perceive with our five senses. There is an *olam elyon* and an *olam tachton*, an upper realm and a lower realm. This parallels the idea of the mind in contrast to the heart of a person.

The mind is the higher level, controlling all that is below it. The heart is the lower level, an emotional one that does not use logic like the mind does. Just as heaven is more exalted than the physical world, within the human being the intellect is higher than the emotions. Emotions give us the energy to act, and so we consider actions to be in the realm of emotions. Intellect controls the emotions and actions.

For example, we see this pattern in the lights of the sky. The two primary objects in the sky that provide light for us on earth are the sun and the moon. The sun is the source of light. The moon

receives light from the sun and thereby also produces light. Similarly, the true source of existence is in the higher worlds, which we do not see. They produce the energy of this world just as the sun produces the light of the moon. So too should the human mind direct, channel, inspire, and lead the heart and body. This is the parallel between the sun and the moon, *sechel* and *lev*, and *olam ha'elyon* and *olam tachton*.

D

Achieving Balance

The purpose of Torah is for a person to achieve unity of mind and emotions, the two great forces within the human being. We face the challenge of creating a unified, cohesive, balanced, and integrated system of thought and emotion, of mind and heart. Many people struggle to achieve this balance. We have seen people who have great minds, but their emotions are completely out of control. Other people have sensitive emotions, but their mind is not developed properly. They have the wrong set of values, and as a result they misdirect their emotions.

Consider for example the idolatry phenomenon that occurred in our nation during the times of the prophets, particularly pervasive during the First Temple era. The Jews felt attached to their idols. Emotionally, they were able to channel their emotions into a strong commitment. But their minds were confused. They did not have the correct concept of Hashem.

Conversely, sometimes people know what is right, but they can't do the right things. This is the more common problem today. We know what is right and wrong but, because our emotions are out of control, we don't get it right. We don't choose to live our lives correctly.

This is the great challenge of every human being, and especially of the Torah Jew. We must learn the Torah so we will know

what is right. We must then also practically fulfill the Torah, using our Torah values by channeling them into our emotional and physical sides. We must use our emotions to guide our actions to do what we know with our minds is right.

These are the first two *psukim* of *kriyas shema*. The first verse states that we must know that everything we do should be determined by God's will, by the lessons of the Torah. Then, "*v'ahavta*" states that we must direct that knowledge into a feeling of commitment and appropriate actions. This is how we should properly combine *sechel* and *regesh*, *moach* and *lev*. This is our central obligation. This is the fundamental idea of the *kriyas shema*. The first *pasuk* emphasizes *moach*, to know what is right and wrong. The second *pasuk* tells us to create a living, active emotional reality. This is the challenge of *kriyas shema*.

E

Purposeful Pause

Why, then, did the people of Yericho run the first *pasuk* into the second without pause? They wanted to emphasize that this exactly is our obligation. "When I learn a new idea, I instantly and automatically convert it into an emotional commitment. This commitment will express itself in actions. I don't pause between what I know and what I feel and do." This is why they did not stop at the grammatically proper end of the first *pasuk*. They didn't stop at *echad*, recognizing that Hashem is our guide, teacher, and leader. They ran that into *v'ahavta*. This is total commitment. "Every part of me, mind and heart, is committed to this cause."

Yet the *chachamim* objected. Even though the goal is proper, a person still has to realize that these are different levels. The people of Yericho aspired to this goal of unifying the different elements of their personality. The *chachamim* did not stop them because the idea is a correct idea.

In the *mitzva* of *arba minim* of Sukkos, we find a representation of the different elements of the human being. The *lulav* comes from a palm tree, which has fruits but no fragrance. This is similar to a Jew who does good things—the good deeds are the fruits that he produces—but he doesn't know that much Torah. The *hadass* is a bush that has a nice fragrance, but no fruits. The fragrance represents the wisdom of the Torah; but he is without *mitzvos*—fruits. The *esrog* is a fruit with a wonderful fragrance. It represents the Jew who has learned Torah and also does *mitzvos*. Sometimes these elements, Torah knowledge and good deeds, are disjointed and sometimes they are united. We have to bring all of these different types of Jews together to produce the tandem of Torah and *mitzvos*, of *sechel* and *regesh*, of proper knowledge and proper feeling and action.

F

***Tefillin* on the Head, *Tefillin* on the Heart**

We also find this idea in the *mitzva* of *tefillin*. The Torah commands a Jewish man to put on two *tefillin*, one on his head and one on his hand. The purpose of the head *tefillin* is to think proper thoughts. The hand *tefillin* next to the heart reminds us to have proper emotions, and to act appropriately. Thus, this *mitzva* combines our intellectual side with our emotional-physical side.

Chazal said that someone who reads *shema* without *tefillin* is a hypocrite. Why not *mezuza*? Why did Chazal emphasize that in *kriyas shema* one is supposed to combine the *tefillin* of *rosh* and *tefillin* of *yad* and say *kriyas shema*? This is not an issue of mentioning the obligation while not performing it. It is about internalizing the message of the focal point of *kriyas shema*. The point is the combination of *moach* and *lev*, the mind and the heart, to know what is right and to feel and do it, too. This is how a person expresses a unified Torah personality.

Many of us have a serious problem of having a split personality. We know what is right, but we don't get it done because we are emotional cripples. The Torah wants us to be emotionally healthy. Together with our healthy emotions we should feel and carry out the Torah ideas. This is the message of *shema* and this is the message of the pair of *tefillin shel rosh* and *shel yad*, *moach* and *lev*, *sechel* and *regesh*.

Now we understand why Chazal emphasized *tefillin* as the epitome of *kriyas shema*, to combine *moach* and *lev*. So, if someone says *shema* without wearing *tefillin* he is not carrying out the idea of *kriyas shema*. He is a *mei'id eidus sheker*. He hypocritically recites false statements about himself. This is why Chazal saw *shema* as specifically connected to the *tefillin*. The *tefillin* and *kriyas shema* share a common purpose: to combine *moach* and *lev*.

G

Immediate Fulfillment

There is another level to this two-part approach of *moach* and *lev*. In the relationship between *shema* and *tefillin*, we again see this connection between mind and emotion-action. *Kriyas shema* is just words. We make a statement about our intellectual knowledge of God a statement of emotional commitment to Hashem. Both, though, are mere words. But *tefillin* is an action. I physically tie it on my hand, and I physically place it on my head. I take the words of *shema* and immediately fulfill them in action with my *tefillin*. By saying *shema* and wearing *tefillin*, we are immediately combining the *moach* with the *lev*. Putting on the *tefillin* is the emotional-physical expression of the intellectual values of *kriyas shema*.

Thus, the *tefillin* repeat the ideas of *kriyas shema* and fulfill them at the *lev* level, turning the combination of *moach* and *lev* into reality. We combine the mind and heart in a real physical way.

H

Back to Battle

How does *kriyas shema* help soldiers win the war? It emphasizes the combination of *moach* and *lev*, mind and heart, of intellect and emotion.

The Zohar says that we experienced two great defeats. The first and second Batei Mikdash were destroyed in battle, first by the Babylonians and then by the Romans. The Zohar adds that the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash was the very goal of those wars. The Babylonians and Romans set out to accomplish this when they started the wars. There is something about the Beis Hamikdash which bothers Jewish enemies more than anything else. Today we see that the Arab jihadists, the enemies of Israel in the Middle East, keep emphasizing that they are fighting to prevent the Jews from building the third temple. The intifada that has been going on now for twenty or thirty years is called in Arabic, “the struggle of Al Quds,” which means the Beis Hamikdash.

More than anything else the enemies of Israel focus on the city of Yerushalayim and its Beis Hamikdash. Why is the Beis Hamikdash the focus of Jewish hatred? Even our friends do not want the state of Israel to have Jerusalem as the capital. They recognize and support Israel, but do not want a Jewish Jerusalem. What is this about? Why are Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash so controversial? Why is this a top-level concern of the entire world? Why are we the only country in the world whose capital is not recognized, even by our so-called friends and allies?

I

The Neck Connection

The Beis Hamikdash is called the *tzavar*, the neck of the Jewish people. When Yosef and Binyamin are finally reunited in Parshas

Vayigash, the Torah says, “*Vayipol al tzavrei binyamin achiv. Yo-sef and Binyamin hugged and cried on each other’s necks.*” The neck of Binyamin refers to the Beis Hamikdash, while the neck of Yosef refers to Shiloh. According to Chazal, each one cried for the destruction of the holy building in his brother’s territory. We note from here that Beis Hamikdash is called *tzavar*, the neck.

Why is the neck the symbol of the Beis Hamikdash? The brain in the head connects through the neck to the spinal cord of the body. The head is the intellectual-spiritual level of man and the body is the physical-emotional part of the person; these two parts connect through the neck. This is the same purpose of the Beis Hamikdash, which connects heaven and earth, the higher and lower levels of reality.

When we come to the Beis Hamikdash, we receive spiritual blessings that pour as into our world from above. When we bring sacrifices there on the *mizbeach*, they rise up through the Mikdash into the higher world. This is the neck-like function of the Beis Hamikdash, to connect the mind and the heart of the universe.

J

The Deep Chasm

Shem Mishmuel expresses an interesting theory. The fundamental objection of the nations of the world against Israel is exactly this idea. They oppose the combination of heaven and earth, of spirituality and reality. The *shema* emphasizes a unity of mind and heart, a unity of what I know is correct and how I behave and feel. The non-Jewish world sees a dichotomy. In all frankness, I sense this in the culture in which we live. There is a huge chasm, a split between what our society knows as true and how people behave in their daily life. Many people don’t base their behavior on what is right or wrong, but on what is advantageous and self-serving.

This is a serious flaw in our modern world. According to Shem Mishmuel, this has always been the case.

To illustrate, the Christian religion claims that it is impossible to take the theory of right and wrong and make it truly happen in the real world. Christian theologians say that man is condemned to sin. He cannot take what he knows to be right and wrong and actually do it. They say he has to be saved by some higher force; a person himself cannot do it.

We know the ideas that dictate today's government policies. Most political leaders say government and foreign policies have nothing to do with right and wrong. The policies are based on national interests. The leaders may know right and wrong, but they expressly state that their interests dictate their policy.

There are, of course, many exceptions, but this generalization is truly on target. Most of the gentile world has split the theory of right and wrong from their practical daily living and their emotional ways of dealing with the world. They do not accept the concept of the channel of the neck. This is why symbolically they have always held the Beis Hamikdash and Yerushalayim as their target. The Beis Hamikdash says there is unity between heaven and earth, that the heavenly idea can become an emotional and physical reality. What you know as right and wrong can become an emotional part of your being and you can implement it in real behavior. This is the *chidush* of Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash.

This is where we split with our fellow human beings and their cultures. We say that it can be done. One can combine the theory of Torah-defined right and wrong with action. Christians say it is impossible. Many far east religions also say it is impossible. If you want to be a saint, they say, stay away from the real world. Go into a monastery in the Himalayas and ponder the spiritual worlds. Don't think you could ever live in the hustle and bustle of the street and be a *tzaddik*. You have to be a monk. *L'havdil*, the Torah says you should live in the hustle and bustle of the world and be a *tzaddik*.

Chassidus emphasizes this point. The real world, with all its strains and pressures, is where you can find the real *tzaddikim*, not in the monasteries. *Tzaddikim* engage in business and society, they have families. This is where the true *tzaddik* can be found. Yaakov the *tzaddik* lived in the home of Lavan and remained loyal to Torah values.

K

Yaakov and Eisav's Core Conflict

This is the core conflict between Yaakov and Eisav. The Torah calls Yaakov "*ish tam*," a complete person. He combined the theoretical and practical into one whole. Eisav had two personalities. In the field Eisav was a hunter and killer, driven by his self-interest. But in front of his father, Yitzchak, Eisav was a *tzaddik*, speaking beautiful words of piety and righteousness. He lived a double existence. In the world outside he was a scoundrel, hunter, and dictator. At home he was a scholar and righteous philosopher. Yaakov had the combination of Torah and *avoda*, *moach* and *lev*. Perhaps we can now understand the statement of Chazal that Eisav wanted to bite Yaakov on his neck. He denied Yaakov's theory of synthesis of the upper and lower parts of the human being.

Now we understand why this is the central cause of the wars of the Jewish people, especially against our brother-enemy Eisav. We may share a common ideology with Eisav. We do not, however, share a common emotional and physical reality. He sees a split in the world between good and evil. He accepts a good philosophy with an evil reality. Hashem, though, sides with Yaakov, who is *ish tam*, a complete person.

The Torah says about Amalek, grandchild of Eisav, "*ki yad al kes Ka*." The regular Name of Hashem is spelled with four letters, but in this *pasuk* the Torah uses the two-letter Name *Ka*, essentially half of Hashem's Name. Amalek split God's Name. This is

the split between heaven and earth, between theory and practice, which Amalek and Eisav epitomize. When Mashiach comes, the Jewish idea will become the idea of the world. Theory and practice, thought and emotion, can be unified. There is no need for them to be split. The human being can develop himself as an integrated personality.

L

The Power of *Kriyas Shema* in Wartime

This is why Rashi says that if the Jewish soldiers want to aspire to victory, they must live the idea of *kriyas shema*. They must live the combination of theory and practice. They must know what is right and they must feel it and do it. Even in the battlefield they are still Jewish and must keep their *kedusha*. “*V’haya machanecha kadosh*.” Even in a war we cannot turn ourselves into animals. We are still human beings. This is how Jews fight their wars—with a *kohen* leading them, the *mashuach milchama*, the assistant high priest. They say *kriyas shema* as they go into battle, living the synthesis of thought, emotion, and action.

The *halacha* states that when a person puts on *tefillin*, he is not allowed to speak between donning the *shel yad* and *shel rosh*. In Maseches Sota, the Gemara says if someone improperly speaks between putting on *tefillin shel yad* and *tefillin shel rosh*, he cannot be a Jewish soldier. He hasn’t gotten the point that being a Jewish soldier means we remain holy and loyal to our values, even on the field of battle, even during this most stressful and difficult time. The *mitzvos* of *kriyas shema* and *tefillin* are central motifs of the Jewish soldier. They are integral to the Jewish assurance of victory in battle against our physical and spiritual enemies, wherever and whenever they will come.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the message of the first two verses of *kriyas shema*?
2. Why did the people of Yericho run the two verses together?
3. How do *tefillin* connect with the first two verses of *kriyas shema*?
4. Why is the Beis Hamikdash described as the neck?
5. How does Judaism differ from other religions in its view of spirituality and reality?
6. What was the core conflict between Yaakov and Eisav?

EXERCISES

1. For a week, chart your intellectual, emotional, and active life. Do you have conflicts or synthesis?
2. Can you improve your synthesis? How?

