

שִׁפְטִים

SHOFTIM/JUDGES

Devarim/Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Engaging in war is a **frightening thought**. I have never been in such a situation, but I can imagine that the **thought** of **losing one's life** can **interfere** with the **focus** one needs to **maintain during battle**. In **Devarim 20**, Moshe begins by **addressing the "fear"** that will certainly come up when it is **time for war**:

Devarim 20:1 "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for יהוה your Elohim is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. ² "So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. ³ "And he shall say to them, 'Hear Israel (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל): Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint (yerach levav - לִבְבְּכֶם לִירָךְ), do not be fearful (al tiru - אַל-תִּירָאוּ), and do not panic (al tachpzu - אַל-תַּחַפְּזוּ) or be terrified (al ta'artzu - אַל-תַּעַרְצוּ) because of them; ⁴ 'for יהוה your Elohim is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

Moshe begins by reminding the children of Israel that there is **no reason to "fear"** since the **same Elohim that brought them out of Egypt will be with them in battle**. Before the battle, the priest will come forth to **address the troops** with a sort of **pep talk**. He will **begin** with the **first words of the Shema**, "**Hear Israel**" (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל). He continues by listing **three types of "fear"** of the "**faint-hearted**" (yerach levav - לִבְבְּכֶם לִירָךְ):

- Do not be **fearful** (al tiru - אַל-תִּירָאוּ)
- Do not **panic** (al tachpzu - אַל-תַּחַפְּזוּ)
- Do not be **terrified** (al ta'artzu - אַל-תַּעַרְצוּ)

Being **afraid** relates to the "**heart**", the **core of one's emotions**. In last week's commentary, we studied how **emotions** can **lead us into idolatry**. Now we see that **emotions** can also be the **cause of "fear"**. If we look at the **process of "fear"** as it relates to **war**, being "**fearful**" can lead to "**panic**" which can result in the **soldier actually leaving the battlefield**. If the "**panicked**" soldier in fact manages to **remain on the battlefield**, his "**panicked**" state may lead to a "**terror**" that could **compromise the defense** of the forces.

Where does "**fear**" come from? "**Fear**" enters our "**hearts**" when we **feel alone**. This **loneliness** usually does **not** come about **from a lack of human companionship**, but more out of a **lack of divine companionship**. If one **feels separated** from the **Almighty**, it doesn't matter how many people are around him, he still **experiences a heavy sense of loneliness** in his "**heart**". This **loneliness** can then **rob** a person of his **physical strength**, which is exactly what one **needs for the battle!**

In his **parting words** to **Israel**, Moshe reminds them **not to "fear"** for **they are not alone**:

Devarim 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for יהוה your Elohim, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

In the very **next** verse, **Moshe repeats this encouragement to Yehoshua (Joshua) “in the sight of all Israel”**. **Yehoshua** is the one who will take the people across the Jordan and **lead the many battles** once they arrive in the Land:

Devarim 31:7 Then Moshe called Yehoshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which יהוה has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. ⁶ "And יהוה, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

Soon after the death of Moshe, יהוה speaks to Yehoshua and once again tells Him to “**not fear**” while repeatedly promising His Presence. Yehoshua’s success will be the result of focusing on and keeping the Torah:

Joshua 1:5 ...as I was with Moshe, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Torah which Moshe My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ "This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for יהוה your Elohim is with you wherever you go."

In the calling of **Jeremiah**, יהוה also encouraged him to “**not be afraid**”:

Jeremiah 1:7 But יהוה said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says יהוה.

In **Isaiah**, it refers to **those who have the Torah in their “hearts”** as the ones who do **not need** to be “**fearful**” of men:

Isaiah 51:7 " Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My Torah: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults.

Yeshua promised His followers the **Presence of the Spirit of Truth to be with them forever**. If they keep His commandments, they will know that **He is with them**:

*John 14:15 " If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever -- ¹⁷ "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ " A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ "At that day you will know that **I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.** ²¹ "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."*

The writer of **Hebrews** also repeats the **promise**:

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**"

And **Rav Sha'ul** (Paul) speaks to the importance of **unity** as it relates to the **Presence of His Spirit**. Perhaps if we set our "**hearts**" on living in **peace** and **fellowship** with one another, then we will be **ready** when the **battle begins**. **Unity** could be the **key** that **removes** that **sense of loneliness** (**no sense of His Presence**) and causes "**fear**" to be replaced with the **confidence** that **He** "**will never leave us**":

2 Corinthians 13:11 ... **Become complete... be of one mind, live in peace; and the Elohim of love and peace will be with you...** ¹⁴ *The grace of Adonai Yeshua the Messiah, and the love of Elohim, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

The **verses** we have read are all **good reminders** for us considering the **unstable world** we live in. This **instability** could easily cause our **emotions** to spark "**fear**" in our "**hearts**". His **constant reminders** of the **promise** of **His Presence** to those who **remember Him** by **living in accordance with His commandments** should **strengthen our faith**. It should also **dissipate any "fear"** stemming from **not sensing His Presence**.

There's one more section of Scripture I'd like to share from the book of **Daniel**. I think it may give us **hope for the end times** when we study **Daniel's example**. After **Daniel's vision and revelation**, the Bible describes him as "**trembling**". **Daniel is comforted by the Almighty** because he has set his "**heart to understand**" and he has "**humbled himself**". As a **result Daniel is strengthened, enlightened and given peace**:

Daniel 10:10 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me **tremble** on my knees and on the palms of my hands. ¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." **While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.** ¹² Then he said to me, "**Do not fear, Daniel**, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your Elohim, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. ¹³ "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come." ¹⁵ When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶ And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, "My Adonai, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷ "For how can this servant of my Adonai talk with you, my Adonai? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me." ¹⁸ Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹ And he said, "O man greatly beloved, **fear not!** Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my Adonai speak, for you have strengthened me."

Returning now to the Torah parasha... the **priest** giving the **pep talk** to the **Israelites** continues with **exemptions from battle for certain individuals**:

Devarim 20:5 "Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: '**What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?** Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. ⁶ '**Also what man is there who has planted a vineyard and has not**

eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.⁷ 'And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.'

Torah teacher **Glenn McWilliams** points out in his **Shoftim commentary** that these passages clearly **point to the Messiah**. He writes that his friend, **Mark Ohlman** uses these verses to explain **why Yeshua, in His first coming, could not come as the Warrior Deliverer** they were **waiting** for:

“It occurred to me however, from our reading that **Y’shua could not come as a Warrior** (thus as Deliverer of the people) in **His first coming**. This seems evident in 20:1-7, where **three exemptions** are given **for military service**. **Messiah is exempt from waging war for every reason listed**. He is, in fact, **still building ‘a House’** (not built with hands), but has **not completed it and has not yet dedicated it**. In addition **He has planted a vineyard (Israel)** but has **not yet ‘redeemed’ it**. Lastly, **He is ‘betrothed’**, but has **not yet ‘married’ His Bride**. When and **until these prerequisites** are met **He cannot come as Man of War as prophesied.**” (end of quote)

In fact **Yeshua, the Warrior** makes His appearance with the **“armies of heaven”** following Him. These warriors are dressed in **“fine linen, white and clean”**, descriptive of His **bride**. Also notice the **parallels with our parasha** as He comes as a **“Judge”** who does so with **“righteousness”** and is the One who makes **“war”**:

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of Yah.¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Friends, we can **“trust”** our **Savior** to see us through the **trials**. We do not need to be ruled by the **emotion** of **“fear”**!

Psalm 27:1 A Psalm of David. יְיָ יְיָ is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? יְיָ יְיָ is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?² When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell.³ Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident.

Baruch HaShem!!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle