

MILITARY TACTICS

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"And it shall be that these matters that I command you today"

Shema Yisrael-- Hear O Israel-- the credo of the Jew. In it are contained the basic principles of our faith--the acceptance of G-d's sovereignty and allegiance to His misvot are the hallmarks of our religion. The Sages teach that the 10 Commandments are also hinted to within the words of the Shema.

The Hafetz Haim in his work Ahabat Hesed says that the verse quoted above is a great lesson in the strategies of the evil inclination and in advice to us in how to counteract his wily ways.

The first tip is to not let yourself get overwhelmed by the vast sea of knowledge called Torah. One may walk into a study hall and see the hundreds or thousands of volumes filling the shelves and say to themselves that there is no way I can learn all of this and that life is just too short for this project called learning Torah. Know clearly that it is your evil inclination that is making you feel inadequate.

Another common situation is that when the opportunity to do a good deed is presented, many people are struck with the bright idea to transfer the responsibility to someone else. "Have you called Bikur Holim?" they ask. "Do you know Mr. so and so? He is very good with these types of situations," they advise. End of the day the misvah that one could have deposited in one's Heavenly bank account is never earned.

One of the most often-used tricks is the tactic of delay. The evil inclination realizes in his wisdom that if he were to try and stop a Jew from doing good deeds, most of his attempts would result in failure. His "plan B" is to get the well-intentioned Jew to delay the performance of his good deed. "As soon as I finish this little errand I will be back". "I'll just go to the store for something and then I'll be able to meet you there". "How about I meet you in 20 minutes?" Don't be fooled it's not your organized sensible self-telling you this idea. It is your evil inclination with one of his many variations of the word "LATER".

So what does Shema have to do with these stratagems? Pay close attention to the words of the verse.

"And it shall be that these words"-- a person should understand that success in Torah learning comes from paying close attention to the piece of Torah in front of you NOW. It is THESE words that you must master and don't be distracted by all else that the sea of Torah knowledge encompasses.

"That I command you". Remember that when a misvah opportunity comes your way it is not an accident. You were chosen by Hashem to do this misvah or to miss out-- it is your personal, individual test. "I" Hashem command "YOU"-- imagine that there is only he and you.

"Today"--is the only time on which one should focus. Yes. It is important to correct the past and plan for a successful future. But the time for accomplishment is now--"Today".

Starting today keep these three strategies for beating the evil inclination on your mind and remind yourself of them with every Shema Yisrael that you recite. The words of the Hafetz Haim will help you beat your enemy at his own game.

Shabbat Shalom

DID YOU KNOW THAT

If one mistakenly started saying the weekday blessings in their Amidah prayer on Shabbat, they should complete the blessing that they are saying when they realize their error and then begin the Shabbat prayer that they should have said in the first place.

This applies to all the prayers of Shabbat except Musaf. In Musaf the person should stop wherever they realize their error and begin the Shabbat Musaf immediately. [Source Shulhan Aruch siman268 and Aharonim]

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