



From the teachings of the  
Rosh Yeshiva of Ateret Yerushalayim  
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

---

Parashat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim 5770

Ask Rav Aviner: [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net)

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: [www.ravaviner.com](http://www.ravaviner.com)

---

## On Yom Ha-Atzmaut...

### Why was Yom Ha-Atzmaut established on the Fifth of Iyar?

[This year Yom Ha-Atzmaut was postponed until 6 Iyar]

There are those who ask why Yom Ha-Atzmaut was established on the 5th of Iyar in particular, since on that day no miracle occurred. The Jewish State was declared, and with it a life-threatening situation began (Chanukah and Purim were established on the day after the "war" ended). Our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, explained that the courage to declare the State is the miracle of miracles, the soul and root of all of the miracles and wonders (Le-Netivot Yisrael vol. 1, p. 179). The Talmud discusses a shepherd who abandoned his flock, leaving it prey to either a wolf or a lion to come and tear it to pieces. The Rabbis established that his responsibility for the slaughter depends on whether or not he would have been able to save the animals. If he would not have been able to overcome the attacking animal, he is exempt from all payment. The Talmud asks: Why is this so? Perhaps it would have happened as for David: "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear" (Shmuel I 17:36)? Perhaps a minor miracle would have occurred (Baba Metzia 106a)? The Tosafot describe the miracle: "A spirit of courage and the knowledge to wage war" (Tosafot ibid.). So too in the matter of the declaration of the State: "The awakening, the exerting of effort, the philosophizing and the strengthening for the drive to rescue and revive [the Nation]," is a miracle from the Heavens, "with a supreme and inner stimulus of power." The fact that the Nation of Israel was filled with the spirit to fight and the knowledge to wage war is the foundation of all miracles (Le-Netivot Yisrael ibid.). From this act flowed all of the miracles which led to establishment and strengthening of the State of Israel.

## Rav Aviner on...

### The Fighter's Spirit

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Tazria-Metzora 5770 – translated by R. Blumberg]

1. The fighter's first trait is not to fear. As Rambam wrote at the end of Chapter 7 of Hilchot Melachim, this is in line with Devarim 20:3: "Do not be faint-hearted, do not be afraid, do not panic."

One might ask: Do people really have control over their fear? Surely it enters one without knocking. Yet this is a question that one can ask about all the mitzvot associated with the heart and the emotions: Don't hate, love your neighbor as yourself, don't covet. People say, "That's how I am. I have no control," but the fact is that while it is true that we do not control our emotions, everyone but the emotionally ill do have control over their thinking. It's true that for most people, thoughts jump into their heads, but here one's free will appears and asks whether to accept those thoughts or to send them far away. Regarding those mitzvot of the heart and emotions, one is obligated to think about things that strengthen good emotions, and one is forbidden to think about things that strengthen negative emotions.

Therefore, in war, Rambam wrote, a person should not start to alarm himself regarding what is liable to happen to him and what his family will then do. And if such thoughts surface, one should get rid of them. It is the same regarding all forbidden thoughts. There were great Torah luminaries who when forbidden thoughts surfaced, would cry out, "Get out of here!" Obviously, they didn't do this in a loud voice in the presence of others. Ramak, Rabbi Moshe Cordovera, would study Torah all night, and when forbidden thoughts surfaced, he would burn them employing the Ineffable Name. Obviously, we are not on that level. Another great rabbi would pass his hands over his forehead to help him draw his evil thoughts out. One especially should not exaggerate the dangers facing the army. An officer from an elite unit told me: "In my life, I have seen death three times before my eyes... in car accidents." Unfortunately car accidents kill countless more Jews than all the terror and all the wars of Israel. Still, nobody avoids traveling by car, or even walking on foot, considering that a third of the people killed in car accidents are pedestrian. This gives us a comparative yardstick. General Yitzhak Sadeh, founder of the Palmach, said, "A heroic person is not someone who doesn't fear. Many heroes fear, but they overcome it knowing that they are on the right course."

Likewise, many fearless people are not heroic. For example, reckless drivers lack fear, but that does not make them heroic. There are war heroes who have fear. The emotion of fear enters, and they expel it from themselves. The main thing, according to Rambam, is not to alarm yourself. Likewise, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov said, "Do not fear at all," and the word he used for fear was not "lefached" but "lehit'pached", which means causing fear to oneself. Avoiding destructive thoughts is right in all situations. For example, one certainly should repent, but one should not engage in excessive self-examination, which is liable to convince a person that he lacks worth. A person has control over this kind of thinking. A disciple once went to visit his Rebbe. He knocked on the door but his Rebbe did not answer. He only peeped at him through the window. The disciple slept outside and in the morning he entered his Rebbe's home and asked him, "Evil thoughts pursue me and I cannot succeed in overcoming them." His Rebbe responded, "I have already answered you. A man lets whomever he wants into his home."

2. The fighter's second characteristic is brotherhood. Without brotherhood between fighters you could close down all the armies on earth. All for one and one for all! That is the unofficial State slogan of Switzerland. There were floods and suffering there, and they raised funds for aid with the help of that solidarity slogan. The phrase originated with Alexander Dumas, whose "Three Musketeers" knew they could always count on one another through fire and water.

Obviously, outside the army as well you need brotherhood, in work and in life, and especially between husband and wife. Unfortunately, a large portion of couples are not good friends. Thank G-d, in the army there is brotherhood, esprit de guerre, between comrades-in-arms.

The Torah states, "When Moses was grown, he began to go out to his own people... One day he saw an Egyptian kill one of his fellow Hebrews... he killed the Egyptian" (Shemot 2:11-12). He knew that all the police forces of Egypt would pursue him, but he realized that brotherhood is the foundation of all else.

In every nation, the foundation of all is brotherhood. The official slogan of France is "Liberty, equality, fraternity." Yet in France, it's not put into practice. Here in Israel, it is. By the way, this is also a major reason for not drafting girls. The presence of girls in combat units causes mixed feelings, confusing and corrupting that same brotherhood. And how does one achieve brotherhood? By not thinking thoughts that might ruin the brotherhood, but only thoughts that strengthen it. One should think, "My fellow soldier is similar to me. He is a good person." Judge people by the majority of their deeds.

3. The third element is responsibility. You've got a mission to fulfill! People are relying on you! Even when you're alone, you've got to follow the rules, and even if you're just guarding the camp gate. The rules can include: Don't fall asleep. Don't listen to the radio. Don't pray. Don't eat. Don't sit down. The guard bears responsibility. A guard once fell asleep and the enemy came in. At his trial he argued, "Thousands of times I guarded properly, and this just happened to me one time." They answered him, "All those thousands of times were for this one time."

Some Rabbis were arguing about whether a guard is exempt from prayer. One Rabbi argued, "He's exempt, because one who is busy with one mitzvah is exempt from another." Another Rabbi said, "He's forbidden to pray. In the army one learns to be responsible so that you'll be able to rely on him even if he fulfills a lowly role. Yet no task in the army is lowly. Everything is important."

There's the famous poem, "All because of a nail". "For want of a nail the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe the horse was lost. For want of a horse the rider was lost. For want of a rider the battle was lost."

One has to be serious. This is a lesson for one's entire life, like courage and brotherhood.

4. Another element is will. Some people lack will. Nothing interests them. Things have happened to them that they have broken their zest for life. You can't blame such people, but they have to realize that their will to live can be rebuilt. How? Gradually. For a small mission, you need a small will in order to achieve success. Then, you slowly increase the challenges until the will becomes stronger. One does not receive a will to act as a gift from heaven, but by means of slowly increasing challenges. Therefore, when someone receives an oppressive, boring mission in the army, he should not complain, but should view it as a challenge. He should be happy. He should sing. He should not view it as a nuisance or a crisis, but as a test and a challenge.

By the way, somebody told me that there is no word in Chinese for "crisis". In China, people work and slave and earn a pittance per day, and even an expert craftsman earns a dollar a day. So what happens if tragedy strikes and a Chinese worker's beloved wife passes away? Now, besides his back-breaking labor, he must care for his little daughter. Will he consider himself to be facing a crisis? Certainly not. A "crisis" is a luxury enjoyed by the rich. If you ask him how he is doing, he will answer, "Nothing has changed. Things are just harder." In the army one faces harder and harder challenges, and from that emerges one's will. True, sometimes a soldier in the army feels that he is being oppressed and harassed. Quite the contrary, however, he should view it all as a challenge! By such means he will emerge with a strong will.

Read Mesillat Yesharim, Chapter 19, with its parable of the combat officer who becomes happier and happier the harder the missions he faces.

The key words are courage, brotherhood, responsibility, and developing will. Were there no need of an army, it would have to be invented just for this. That is how G-d orchestrated His world with wisdom and love.

Be strong and courageous!

## Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Our Rabbi and the Yeshiva Students – Part 4

Once, a group of students from the Religious Kibbutz Movement was scheduled to come and study at Mercaz Ha-Rav for a month. Some of the Yeshivah students complained that the Yeshiva was unable to absorb so many students, and that in order to strengthen the study atmosphere the Yeshiva had to first become crystallized from within. Our Rabbi, though, was uncompromising in his desire to receive the group, exclaiming, "Any thought of divorcing our Yeshiva from the concrete settlement of the Land of Israel, will not come to be."

On another occasion our Rabbi instructed one student in a certain manner and another in an opposite manner. When asked why he contradicted himself our Rabbi explained that once upon a time there had been both Hillel and Shammai: Shammai chased away the prospective convert because there was Hillel, and Hillel taught the very same convert the "entire Torah" on one foot because there was Shammai. "What can I do - I have no choice but to be both Hillel and Shammai."

What do you want to do?

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner once asked our Rabbi what he should do with his life. Our Rabbi asked him: "What do you want to do?" His dedicated student responded: "I want to do what the Rav wants me to do." Our Rabbi repeated: "But what do you want to do?" Once again, Rav Aviner answered that he wanted to do whatever the Rosh Yeshiva advised. Patiently, our Rabbi asked him a third time, with a tone that demanded a more introspective response. Finally, the student revealed his heart's true desire. "Then do it!" Rav Tzvi Yehudah said. This was our Rabbi's way: to educate each student according to his natural direction, according to his individual talent and leaning, to encourage creativity and the free healthy development of each person's potential (see Mishlei 22:6). (Torat Eretz Yisrael – The Teachings of Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohen Kook, pp. 205-206)

Special thank you to Fred Casden for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parshah Sheet



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528

[www.ateret.org.il](http://www.ateret.org.il) To subscribe, send e-mail to: [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net)

