



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

Parashat Acharei Mot - #345

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On Pesach...

"The Time of our freedom"

[Ha-Rav's commentary on the Haggadah]

Question: What is the connection between freedom and the prohibition of Chametz (leaven)? The entire process of ridding ourselves of Chametz seems like a heavy burden which robs a person of his freedom. And in general, all of the Mitzvot seem to deprive the natural movements of a person.

Answer: Rav Kook explained that true freedom includes two aspects:

- a. Freedom of the body: Physical freedom from any foreign subjugation: Anything which forces the image of G-d within a person to be subjugated to any other power lessens that person's worth.
- b. Freedom of the soul: Spiritual freedom from anything which turns it from the straightness which is its essential existence. G-d created man upright, and He cleanses man from any inner refuse which sullies his inner holiness.

Regarding these two aspects, each morning we recite the blessing, "who has not made me a slave." The Mitzvot are not foreign entities which are forced upon a person, rather they reveal his inner essence. Before the Mitzvot were engraved on the tablets that were given at Mount Sinai, they were written on the "tablets" of every Jew's soul. Our Sages therefore said: They were "Charut" (engraved) on the tablets – do not read the word as "Charut" (engraved) but as "Cherut" (freedom) (Pirkei Avot 6:2). By slightly changing the vocalization of the word, we learn an incredible lesson: In order to truly be a free people, it is not enough to be liberated from physical slavery. On the contrary, it is possible to have an enlightened slave whose spirit is full of freedom, and a free person whose spirit is enslaved. We were transformed into free people on Pesach, but we do not

become truly free until we rid ourselves of anything which robs us of our natural essence. This is the reason for destroying the Chametz. It symbolizes the evil inclination and called "the yeast in the dough," because it ferments in the heart of people and causes them to transgress (see Bereachot 17a). The destruction of our internal Chametz is what allows us to raise the flag of freedom (Olat Re'eiyah vol. 2, pp. 244-245).

Rav Aviner on...

The Weekly "Mi-Sheberach" Prayer for Tzahal Soldiers

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Tazria 5774 – translated by R. Blumberg]

May He who blessed our ancestors, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov: They were our ancestors and we follow in their path. They were holy, and, simultaneously, they were fighters. Avraham fought against the four kings, and Yaakov fought "with his sword and bow" (Bereshit 48:22, regarding the battle for Shechem).

The same goes for Moshe and Yehoshua Bin Nun, Otniel ben Kenaz and King David. They were not just soldiers from the ranks, but army generals. When a war is imperative to our survival, it is a war of G-d (*Orot* 14).

Also bless the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces: For they are performing a great Mitzvah, a three-fold Mitzvah of the Torah incorporating: 1. Defense of the Nation. 2. Defense of the Land. 3. The sanctification of G-d's Name. When we are being beaten and murdered, robbed and raped, it is a desecration of G-d's name. And when we fiercely respond to our enemies it is a sanctification of G-d's name (Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, *Le-Nitivot Yisrael* 1:118). Essentially, when a person does a Mitzvah he declares G-d's oneness, and when he does so, G-d causes holiness and even blessing to envelop that person. When Yaakov was preparing for war with Esav, he traversed the "Yabok Crossing" (Bereshit 32:23). Yabok stands for Yichud [declaring oneness], Berachah [blessing] and Kedushah [holiness].

The Israel Defense Forces: The I.D.F. is not an occupation force. Our intent is not to plunder foreign lands, but to defend our own Nation and Land. We are an army of defense. That is our essence. Ours is a *Milchemet Mitzvah* according to all opinions, a moral, compulsory war.

Who stand guard over our land: How fortunate we are that through G-d's grace we received our Land, but we must protect it day and night, and not fall asleep while at watch. Rashi comments on the words, "May your doorbolts be iron and copper" (Devarim 33:25), "This refers to the entire Jewish People, whose warriors would sit in the border towns closing them off from enemy attack, as though those towns were locked with iron and brass locks and bolts." Sure enough, we have 350 million enemies all around us, and they are assisted by some billion Moslems and some billion Christians, plus several more million Arabs helping them from within. The Guardian of Israel, and His faithful emissaries, will neither rest nor sleep.

And over the cities of our G-d: This Land is the Land of G-d. It is the holy Land. It is the Land of holiness. It is “the Land which G-d keeps His eyes on from the start of the year to the end of the year” (Devarim 11:12). It is the Land in which G-d is returning His Divine presence to Tzion. Every people sacrifices its life for its Land, all the more so we for our holy Land.

From Lebanon to the Egyptian Desert, and from the Great Sea to the wilderness: We are commanded regarding this entire Land not to abandon any part of it to any other nation (Ramban's Addendum 4 to Rambam's *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*).

Wherever they are, on the land on the sea or in the air: This is a holy army. This is a beloved army. This is an army full of love for Israel, one which sacrifices its life for the sake of Israel. This is an army full of friendship and camaraderie and unity. This is an army in which every soldier is infused with a new spirit, a spirit of self-abnegation for the sake of the Jewish People. This is an army in which it is both a supreme duty and a lofty privilege to participate.

G-d will leave our enemies who rise up against us smitten before them: Our enemies are the enemies of G-d. “When the ark was to set out, Moshs would say, ‘Advance, Hashem! May Your enemies be scattered, and may Your foes flee before You!’” (Bamidbar 10:35).

Your enemies: “These are the enemies of Israel, for whoever hates Israel hates the One whose word brought the world into being” (Rashi).

G-d will preserve and rescue our soldiers from all trouble and suffering and from every plague and

illness: “When the soldier enters into battle, he should rely upon the Hope of Israel, its Deliverer in times of trouble. And he should be aware that he is fighting for the sake of G-d's Oneness. He should take his life in his hands and have no fear... Whoever fights with all his heart and without fear, with the sole intention of sanctifying G-d's name, can rest assured that he will not be hurt and no harm will befall him, and he will go on to produce a fine Jewish home. G-d will bring him and his children everlasting merit, and he will merit the World-to-Come. As it says (Shmuel 1 25:28-29), 'For G-d will grant my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting G-d's battles, and no wrong is ever to be found in you... The life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of life in G-d's care'” (Rambam Hilchot Melachim U-milchamot 7:15).

And he will bestow blessing and success upon all their endeavors: “I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore. Your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes” (Bereshit 22:7).

He will drive our enemies down under them and He will crown them with the crown of salvation and victory: “If he saves people sentenced to die, he brings merit to his soul as though he has fulfilled the entire Torah, for our sages said, ‘If someone saves the life of a single Jew it is as though he has saved an entire world’ (Sanhedrin 36a). Of such people

they said, 'Even the most worthless Jews are as full of Mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds' (Berachot 27a). Many Jews leave an outward impression of being empty vessels, but they possess this Mitzvah of saving a Jew, thereby surpassing the greatest Rabbis of Israel' (*Pele Yo'etz, Erech: Hatzala*). How much more so this is true of someone who saves many Jews.

For it is Hashem your G-d who goes before you to fight for you with your enemies, to save you: "Hashem of hosts is Hashem, the G-d of Israel, and the hosts of Israel are the hosts of G-d" (Orot 24), "Who is that uncircumcised Philistine that he dares defy the ranks of the Living G-d?" (Shmuel 1 17:26); "I come against you in the Name of Hashem of hosts, the G-d of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied" (ibid., v. 45). "When you take the field against your enemies... Have no fear of them, for Hashem your G-d, who brought you from the Land of Egypt, is with you... Hear, O Israel! You are about to join battle with your enemy. Let not your courage falter. Do not be in fear, or in panic, or in dread of them. For it is Hashem your G-d who marches with you to do battle for you against your enemy, to bring you victory" (Devarim 20:1-4).

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