



## הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
ישיבה קטנה ארצות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
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### Parashat Ki Tetzei

## Preparation for the Days of Judgment – Open for Me an Opening Like the Point of a Needle

The *parasha* states (*Devarim* 21:10), **"When you go out to war [to battle] your enemies and Hashem, Your G-d, will give them into your hands."**

### Questions

1. Why does the Torah write, "When you will **go out** to war" (*Ki tetzei le'milchama*) and not simply, "when you make war" (*ki telachem*)?
2. Why is the verse written in the singular? Since we are referring to all the Jewish people, the verse should have been written in the plural?

### What the World Thinks

In the outside world, it is accepted that success depends on the result, and only when a person accomplishes what he set out to do is he considered successful. On the other hand, very little emphasis is placed on the initial work necessary to produce the result. However, our holy Torah teaches us the exact opposite – our success is solely dependent upon our initial effort. If we start off on the right foot, the end will be good (*ki tov achrit davar mereishito*) for a good result is determined by the start.

### The Explanation of the *Ohr Hachaim* – an Allusion to the Battle with the Evil Inclination

The *Sefer Maggid Meisharim* (*Parashat Ki Tetzei*) says that our *parasha* is alluding to a person's battle with his evil inclination. The *Ohr Hachaim* similarly explains that the *pasuk* which states, "She [- the captive girl] will cry a month for her father and mother," alludes to the month of Elul – the month of mercy and supplications. It seems that the *Ohr Hachaim* also understood that the verse in the beginning of the *parasha* is alluding to the battle with the evil inclination. Everyone has their own personal battle to fight in this area. It says in *Avot* (4:2), "Who is mighty? He who conquers his evil inclination." This teaches us that this is the most difficult battle that a person fights, since the evil inclination is our greatest enemy and fights us every day and every hour. To help us in our battle, the Torah gives us a piece of advice: To conquer our evil inclination, we must start fighting him ourselves. After we take the initial step though, Hashem will take over and help us. This is alluded to in the verse when it says, "When you go out," which means that a person only has to **go out** to the battle, "And he will be given into your hands" – the evil inclination will be conquered for you. For that is the way of Hashem - He only asks that the person give him an opening even as tiny as the point of a needle, and He will make him an opening the size of a hall. This is why the Torah writes, "When you go out." It teaches us that we will not have to reach the stage of actually fighting. Once a person makes a genuine commitment to start, immediately when he starts out, Hashem will hand over the enemy to him, and he will be victorious.

### The *Segula* of "Open for Me an Opening Like the Point of a Needle"



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Chazal say in *Shir Hashirim Rabba* (parasha 5), "Hashem told the Jewish people (when they were in Egypt) open for Me one opening of *teshuva* like the point of a needle, and I will open up for you an opening so big that wagons and carriages can enter. This requires explanation. Does Hashem show favoritism? Why do the Jewish people deserve this? According to what we said earlier, since all beginnings are difficult, the primary challenge is to start, and the rest follows naturally. Therefore, it's enough to have the desire to start and have an opening like the point of a needle. The rest will come by itself until the opening is large enough for carriages and wagons to enter. The source for this in the Torah seems to be found in the *Mechilta Parashat Yitro*, which interprets the verse (*Shemot* 19:5) "*V'ata im shema teshme'un be'koli*" as follows: "*V'ata*"- and now accept upon yourselves (to do the mitzvot), as all beginnings are difficult. "*Im shema tishme'un*"- from this we learn that whoever listens [and does one mitzva, we will let him hear many mitzvot. We see from this, that the beginning is what's really difficult, but once a person accepts upon himself to do a mitzva, afterwards it will be easy for him.

### The Words of the *Yerushalmi* - Everything Depends on How You Start

The *Yerushalmi* (*Chagiga* 2:1) is also clear that our spiritual success depends on how we start. The *Yerushalmi* relates how Elisha Ben Avuya once told R' Meir an explanation of R' Akiva's on a verse in *Kohelet* (7:8). The verse says "*Tov acharit davar me'reishito*," which R' Akiva explains to mean that a thing will turn out well only when it was good in the beginning. Elisha brings proof from his own life to R' Akiva's interpretation. On the day of Elisha's *brit mila*, his father, one of the distinguished residents of Yerushalayim, invited all the great men of Yerushalayim to his house for the meal. Among the guests were R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua, who instead of participating in the festivities, began to learn Torah. When they were learning, a fire descended from the heavens and surrounded them. Avuya got frightened and complained to them that they were going to burn his home down. They calmed him down and told him that this was not a destructive fire, but the fire of the Torah given at Har Sinai. Avuya was so impressed with the power of the Torah that he decided to dedicate his newborn son to Torah. Since Elisha's father's intents were not purely for the sake of Heaven, Elisha did not succeed in maintaining his Torah (and left the Torah path). Our everyday speech reflects this idea as well. When we see someone who is angry or upset, we say that he got up on the wrong side of the bed in the morning. Since his day started off on the wrong foot, he continues to be in a bad mood all day and can't change it.

### A Good Start - In Mitzvot and in Life

This is also the greatness of the mitzvot of *Terumot* and *Maaserot*, *Challa* and *Bikurim*, where we dedicate our initial produce and food to *kedusha*. This will then influence and bring *kedusha* to the rest of our food. Similarly, the *brit mila* is considered the start of our spiritual life and the day when our spiritual lot will be determined. The *Ben Ish Chai* writes that a person should celebrate his birthday not on the day of his birth, but on the day of his *brit mila*, which is the start of his spiritual life. That is why Elisha had an evil end, since he began his life based on his father's personal honor. This is the explanation why we say at the *brit*, "Just as you have entered the *brit*, you should come to Torah, marriage, and good deeds." We are saying that just as you have begun your life in a good way by having a *brit mila*, so too, the rest of your life should follow from that good as everything depends upon the beginning.



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### The Chatam Sofer's Story

The Chatam Sofer once told his students that he merited becoming the Chatam Sofer because of 5 minutes. His students asked him - how can you become great in Torah in 5 minutes? He answered them that in general, when a person starts his learning session, he first talks about mundane matters and only afterwards starts to learn. Experience shows that once you start talking about mundane matters, a lot of time is wasted and very little ground is covered. "I," said the Chatam Sofer, "accepted upon myself not to interrupt my learning during those first 5 minutes and to push away my evil inclination, come what may. I then utilized all this time for learning, and I thereby took great strides.

### A Story About How One Mitzva Leads to Another

In the *sefer Ma'aseihen Shel Tzaddikim al Haparasha* there is a story about a wealthy individual from a small town in Russia, who was infamous for his miserliness. He had a metal box attached to the wall of his house, and anyone who came to request *tzedaka* was given a coin from this box. However, the coin he gave the paupers was a corroded copper one that even the most destitute pauper would be embarrassed to accept. They would therefore always toss the coin back to him, and he returned it to his box. This situation repeated itself time and time again, and he became known far and wide as an extraordinary miser.

A wedding was arranged for a pair of orphans, and the entire town's people were recruited to assist them. The ruler at the time was Alexander the First. He had issued a decree requiring a specific amount of Jews to be drafted into the Russian army each year. The wealthy individuals always managed to free their sons from the draft by bribing the Russian officials, and the impoverished children were therefore taken against their will to the army. The particular orphan who was set to get married was considered a defector from the army, and when the police discovered that he was getting married that day, they knew that this was the time to snatch him. Indeed, in middle of the wedding preparations, the police appeared and forced the orphan to come with them to the army. All of the town's people were saddened, and they did not know what to do. At that time, the *Baal HaTanya*, R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi arrived in the town and heard what had happened. He immediately requested that the town's people prepare him a list of all the wealthy individuals in the town, so that he could collect the necessary funds to free the orphan. They prepared the list, and when the *Baal HaTanya* read it, he was bewildered. He had heard that there was an extremely wealthy man in the town, so he asked them why his name was not included on the list. They responded that he was very miserly and never contributed any money apart from a rusty copper coin. The *Baal HaTanya* told them to write his name on the top of the list, and he was the first individual they visited. Accompanied by the *rav* of the city, the *Baal HaTanya* told the wealthy man what had transpired and requested him to help them perform this mitzva of *pidyon shvu'im* [redeeming a Jew from captivity]. The wealthy man walked over to his box, removed the rusty copper coin, and brought it to the *Baal HaTanya*. The *rav* of the city became angry and almost exploded in a fit of rage. But the *Baal HaTanya* reacted first, and immediately blessed the man that he should merit performing more mitzvot, because one mitzva leads to another. He then turned to leave. However the wealthy man stopped them from leaving and asked them to wait a moment. He then brought them an entire ruble, at which point the *Baal HaTanya* repeated his blessing and turned to leave. But the wealthy man asked them to wait and this time gave them an additional ten rubles. The *Baal HaTanya* again attempted to leave, but the man stopped them yet another time, bringing them 1000 rubles, at which point he burst into tears. He then said to the *Baal HaTanya*, "The coin that I gave you initially was the first coin that I



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had ever given to a poor man. However, when I gave it to him, he threw it back at me. I then swore that I would never again give *tzedaka* until someone would accept this coin and thank me for it. Until today, for years, no one accepted nor thanked me for this coin. That is, until you arrived. I am therefore willing to give all that you need to free the *chatan*." He immediately gave them the 5000 rubles that they needed. The *chatan* was freed and the wedding took place. We see from here the importance of taking the first step. Afterwards, man will receive the special help that he needs.

### Words of Mussar:

We have learned that a proper beginning is a tremendous *segula* for success, and therefore it's very important for a person to start out and fight to overcome his evil inclination. He should open for Hashem an opening like the point of a needle, so that Hashem can open for him an opening the size of a hall. He should make great efforts to always start his day with a mitzva, as well as each week, each month, and each year. He should be careful that all his beginnings should be for holy things, and in this way, a person will merit conquering his evil inclination and doing the Will of his Creator. This is especially important now in the month of Elul, when we must prepare for the Days of Judgment. By making sure that we always have a proper beginning, we can feel confident that, with the help of Hashem, we will merit being written and sealed for life, for good, and for peace.

Shabbat Shalom

Rav Mordechai Malka