

## Leah & Devora: The Unique Quality of Womens Prayer Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In *Yalkut Shimoni*, Chazal say, Hashem fights our wars and we gain from the victory. This is what Devora told Barak. She saw through prophecy that a miracle would happen and there would be no need for warriors. She tells Barak to get up, but not to fight because the battle would be fought by Hashem. Although the army of Yavin was huge and many nations participated, the Jews didn't have to do anything. When their hearts were motivated to repent, Hashem fought for them. Later on, there seems to be a contradictory pasuk. Devora says, "My soul should strengthen itself." It seems like she is going to fight. Targum Yonoson translates it, "My soul stepped on the dead of the strong people." When you are afraid of someone, even when you see him dead and try to step on him, there is still some level of fear. Devora had to strengthen herself to step on the dead enemy. This indicates how great the miracle was. It was very much like *Kriat Yam Suf*. The Jewish people were totally not prepared for war. The Egyptians were pursuing them and the sea stood in front of them. There was no way out. Moshe told them, "Hashem will fight for you and you can be quiet. It's not even a time for prayer. The only thing you have to do is trust Hashem. Here too, Devora indicates that that the victory was totally from Hashem. Devora wasn't blinded by the victory. It was Ashira l'Hashem. She doesn't mention herself or Barak or the 10,000 people. Her song is about the connection to the giving of the Torah, to the fact that Hashem came down on the mountain, to the Onochi Hashem Elokecha. Devora uses the victory in order to

achieve what it's supposed to and that's the greatness of it.

There is another aspect to what Devora does here that is very unique. There are two women who are mentioned in her song, Yael, who killed Sisra and the mother of Sisra. Yael did something very difficult. She was an exemplary modest woman yet she invited Sisra, a non-Jewish general into her tent and she killed him, not a simple story. Women by nature are merciful. Not only did she go against her essence, but she did it in a way that made it much more difficult. Instead of using a sword, she pulled a peg out of the tent and banged it into his forehead. She wanted to retain her modesty and so she took something out of the tent, a symbol of modesty. She wanted to remind herself that it is not the manner of women to kill but she had been called upon by circumstances to save the Jewish people. When Sisra went by her tent she saw it as a sign from Hashem that she had to take action. There was a relationship between the king of Canaan and the family of Yael. He trusted them and so she felt Hashem had sent her an opportunity to save the Jewish people. If we look at this story peripherally, we might assume Yael was a cruel woman who killed a general. But Chazal explain it quite the opposite.

Devora also speaks about the mother of Sisra. She stood at the window crying, worrying why her son had not returned. It seems a sentimental picture, a mother at her best, anxious to see her child back home. Her wise friends

attempted to placate her. Surely, he has won the war and he is busy collecting and dividing all the booty. Did she think about the mothers of all the dead people from whom he was taking all the booty? Did she think about all the poor women who were now given over to this cruel person who hated Jews? Obviously, this is Sisra's mother and the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Devora concludes, "May all the enemies of Hashem be destroyed like Sisra." Devora praises those who deserves praise and criticizes those who appear merciful but are really wicked.

This basically records what happened at the war. Where is the prayer here? In Parshat Vayechi it says, "*R'euh et panecha lo pilalti*- I did not anticipate seeing your face." When Yosef came with his two children to receive Yaakov's blessing, he said, "I didn't anticipate that I would see you and now I see your children too." Rav Hirsh explains, *pilalti*-I didn't anticipate, is also the root of the word tefilah. Palul means bringing in a spiritual element into one's thoughts or circumstances. *L'hitpalel* is in the hispaal tense. It's a reflective verb as in doing something to oneself. To pray is to internalize or to penetrate within oneself spiritual ideas. Rav Hirsh says, "*Tefilat ha'yehudi eino yotzet m'tocho*- The prayer of a Jew is not something that comes from the inside and goes out." Of course, in terms of the feeling, there is something that emerges and is expressed in *tefilah* but there is also the element that comes from the outside and penetrates inward.



## Make it Count 28

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenbaum

Day 28 is the *middah of malchut sheb'netzach*, victory and royalty, perfect companions. When *netzach* reaches its pinnacle, it declares Hashem the eternal victor over the entire world. *Malchut she'b'netzach* empowers us to win and rule over our eternal enemy, the yetzer hara. *Malchut she'b'netzach* helps us to overcome even the strongest temptations. When the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva passed away, "*Shelo nehegu kavod zeh b'zeh*," he did not despair. He took five new students, among them Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai, and restored Torah to *Klal Yisrael*. The

Gemara says that once Rabbi Yehuda was walking past his field. He had already accepted Shabbat. He saw that the gate was open and if he left it that way, his entire *parnasa* which was not much, would be completely destroyed. But in order to close the gate he would need to transgress a melacha. He fought a tremendous battle within. In the end he overcame his yetzer hara. He walked away from the field and didn't come back until after Shabbat. The Gemara says, a very unique tree whose fruits were valued at a very high price, grew overnight at the opening to the fence, protecting him from loss. He sold those fruit and became wealthy.

The Arizal tells us that Rabbi Yehuda was a reincarnation of Zelafachad, the *Mekoshesh Eitzim*, who according to some opinions transgressed *Shabbat* in order to teach *Klal Yisrael* the punishment of those who don't keep Shabbat. Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai rectified what he had done. On this day, our *avodah* is *malchut sheb'netzach*. Let's analyze what are our weakest points and what are our strongest enemies. Let us ask Hashem to give us the *middah of malchut sheb'netzach*, the strength to overcome our flaws and weaknesses and to emerge victorious over our yetzer hara.

## Suicide- Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

The Bach asks, what if someone wants to be stringent and wants to allow himself to be killed rather than transgress? In certain cases, he would be allowed to do. Tosfot brings proof from the Talmud Yerushalmi which tells the story of Abba bar Zimnan who was working as a tailor. His employer said to him, "I want you to eat non-kosher food and if you don't, I will kill you." He said to him, "I will not transgress. Kill me." We can assume in this case, it was in private, in the home of his employer. But Abba bar Zimnan wanted to be strict with himself and he gave up his life. The Rosh in Tosfot says that we see from here that if someone wants to, he is permitted to forfeit his life and it's not considered a sin. The Rambam disagrees and says that in any case where you are not obligated to give up your life it would be a sin to do so. In the case of the Yerushalmi, according to the Rambam, it must have been in public or in a time of *gezeirat hashemad*. The Bach and the Shach bring the Semak who agrees with the Tosfot

and the Rosh, and not with the Rambam, that it would be considered *middat chassidut*, a worthy thing, for a person to refrain from transgressing even in private and even for a *mitzvah* that is not one of the three cardinal *mitzvot*. He doesn't transgress anything by doing so. His intention is for the sake of heaven. In the case of Abba Bar Zimnan he allowed himself to be killed, although it was in private, and according to the Rambam it was a sin and it must have been in public. Nevertheless, the Semak says no. It was done in private, but he was allowed to do it because he had good intentions. He brings proof from the case of Shaul Hamelech who asked his attendants to kill him so he wouldn't be tortured by the Pelishtim. His intention was for the sake of heaven so that there shouldn't be a desecration of Hashem's name. There was a danger that others would be publicly tortured and it would completely demoralize the Jewish people. Others say no. You can't bring proof from the case of Shaul Hamelech because he

didn't rely on himself that he would be able to withstand the torture. But as we saw in the Shach there are opinions that argue with this.

There were many cases in Jewish history of people who gave up their lives so as not to transgress the Torah. One famous case was Masada. The Romans laid siege to the Jewish community living on top of the mountain in Masada. Yosefin writes about the mass suicide that took place there in order that they wouldn't fall into the hands of Romans who would force them to abandon their religion. That would have been the permission they had to do what they did, although some raised doubts as to whether it was permitted. The Yam Shel Shlomo says, to prevent yourself from converting, you would not be allowed to kill yourself. If they kill you, you would allow them to kill you. Only in a case where you wouldn't be able to withstand the torture and that would put other people in danger, would you be allowed to kill yourself.