



KINDER TORAHTM ©

PARASHAS VAYECHI

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

"The news these days is very frightening."

"What are you concerned about?"

"One of our neighboring countries is working on developing very powerful weapons. They could be a major threat to our security."

"I'm not worried."

"Why not?"

"We have a mighty arsenal at our disposal. We have a variety of extremely powerful weapons that will put our enemy to shame."

"Really? I wasn't aware of that. The enemy claims to have nuclear weapons. They are the most powerful on earth."

"They are mere child's play. Our arsenal can dispose of his nuclear bombs in seconds."

"You have my curiosity really going. What weapons are you talking about? What can stand up against the atomic bomb?"

"The sword and the bow."

"What?!?! The sword and the bow?!?! Are you joking? They are thousands of years old. They are so primitive that they cannot defend against even the simplest gun or cannon. Please be serious."

"I am serious. Very serious. Our ancestor Yaakov Avinu used them very effectively against his enemies. Since then, they have been the traditional weapons of the Jewish people against their foes."

"That is a pretty surprising statement. Do you have a proof to back it up?"

"Yes, it is actually a verse in this week's parasha. 'As for me, I have given you Shechem – one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorie with my sword and with my bow' (Bereshis 48:22). The Targum Unkelos reveals the secret of the strength of the sword and bow. He translates sword as prayer and bow as request. This is actually based upon the Gemora (Bava Basra 123a). 'Did Yaakov Avinu truly take the land of the Emorie with a sword and bow? Of course not! He took them with prayers and appeals to Hashem.' The Maharsha elaborates that Yaakov's enemies were blessed by Hashem with military prowess. 'By the sword you shall live' (Bereshis 27:40) was Eisav's blessing. 'And Hashem was with the lad . . . and he became an archer' (Bereshis 21:20) was Yishmael's fortune. To battle these forces, Hashem gave Yaakov prayer (described as a sword) and appeals (described as a bow)."

"That is fascinating."

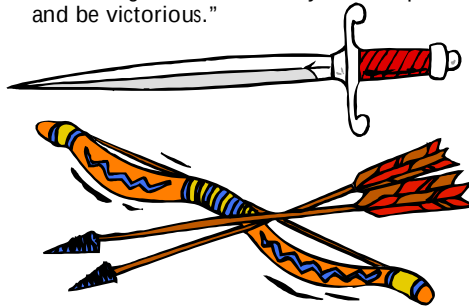
"There is more. Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel zt"l states that *tefillah* is the true sword! It has the power to overturn the entire world! Atomic bombs pale against the might of *tefillah*! Therefore, the *Yetzer Hora* works very hard to distract us during *tefillah*. It takes a *gibbor* (strong person) to overcome the *yetzer*, and concentrate on the *tefillah*. One who does this has the awesome power in his hand."

"May Hashem help us all in this area."

"Amen. Rashi and the Sforno have a different interpretation of Yaakov's weaponry. The sword is *chochma* (wisdom). The Sfsei Chacomm elaborates that just as the sword has the capability of saving its bearer (from danger), so too *chochma* saves the wise person from danger."

"Now I see why you are not nervous about the news of the day. The puny weapons of our enemies do not stand a chance against our prayers, requests, and wisdom."

"That's right. Just choose your weapon and be victorious."



Kinderlach . . .

Hashem gave us the world's most powerful arsenal. Our enemy's weapons don't stand a chance against our tefillos, baka-shos (requests), and chochma (Torah wisdom). Why? Because we are speaking directly to Hashem, asking Him to fight for us. He is more powerful than any nuclear bomb. When we learn His Torah, we absorb His chochma. That is better than the best anti-missile defense system. Choose your weapons, kinderlach. Tefillos, requests, chochma. They will win the battle.

HOW TO CRITICIZE

"Akiva, you're terrible!"

"What did I do?"

"You embarrassed me in front of my friends. You're so bad."

"Boys, let's try to stop this quarrel before it gets out of hand. Akiva, did you really embarrass Reuven in public?"

"Ummm. Well. I suppose I did."

"Then you must apologize. That is a very

serious aveyra (sin)."

"I'm so sorry, Reuven."

"Now, Reuven, you must be careful what you say to Akiva, even when you are upset with him."

"What did I do wrong, Imma?"

"You criticized him personally. Akiva is not bad. What he did is bad. But he is a very good boy."

"If Akiva is good, why did he do that?"

"People make mistakes. We are allowed to criticize the mistake, not the person."

"How do you know that, Imma?"

"When Yaakov gave blessings to his sons, he cursed the anger of Shimon and Levi. Rashi points out that although Yaakov was giving *tochacha* (constructive criticism), he only rebuked the fault, and not the people."

"What is wrong with criticizing a person?"

"Personal criticism makes a person feel very badly, and lowers his self esteem. You have called him a bad person. On the other hand, if you only point out his fault, then you are not saying anything bad about him personally. He is good. He just needs to correct the fault."

"When I compliment, can I praise the whole person?"

"Surely."

"Imma, you're wonderful."

Kinderlach . . .

Criticism is a very delicate subject. We should avoid having to criticize as much as we can. Sometimes, however, it is unavoidable. Then we must proceed very cautiously. Be careful to greet the person nicely first. Complimenting him or letting him know how much you care is also a good idea. Just speak about the fault, and not the person. Lastly, make the fault seem easy to correct. For example, "I am sure that a dedicated person like you will have no trouble taking care of this." Most important of all is to be truly concerned about the person. Giving constructive criticism is one of the 613 mitzvos (parashas Kedoshim). It is one of those that brings a person to the ultimate mitzvah bein adam lichavero (between man and his fellow man) of "love your fellow Jew as you love yourself."

Parasha Questions:

- What is chessed shel emmes? (Rashi 47:29)
- Why was Rachel buried on the way to Beis Lechem? (Rashi 48:7)
- What special blessing do fish have when they multiply? (Rashi 48:16)
- Who was destined to descend from Efrayim? (Rashi 48:19)