

## Shabbat Shalom with a Side of Torah - Ki Taetzae

I have always believed that a full one half of the healing process is mental/emotional. Ill people who want to get better stand a better chance of doing so than people who do not want to or who do not care whether they do or do not. Getting better is itself relative. We usually think of healing as the end of the illness, but healing can come in many forms. One who is disabled heals, as he comes to terms with his disability, committing to living life to the fullest he is able to live. One who is dying heals by dying with peace on her own terms. A survivor heals through the process of not only bodily restoration but emotional as well. Many people "get better" but never heal. We say prayers for people who struggle physically and emotionally. I do not believe that God changes the level of healing one obtains based on greater or lesser numbers of people praying. I do believe that when someone knows that they matter to others, they feel more empowered to heal.

In reading a collection of commentaries on this week's Torah portion, I found a related profound thought on the first verse of the portion, ""When you go out to war on your enemies, and God will place him in your hands... (Deuteronomy 21:10)" In discussing the wars we have fought in history, the author (believing that the theme of anti-Semitism links each one, making the singular "him." refer to all of our enemies) penned a wonderful phrase, "An enemy of the Jewish soul is an enemy of the Jewish body." You have to know that my egalitarian frame of reference extended this beyond the confines of Jewish existence. While the Chasidic commentator had the right idea, he was more intent on proving "our problems" in the world. As I think about his words, though, I see a truth to which too few of us really pay attention. The focus for this argument revolves a single word in the text. The Hebrew word "*al*," as usually translates as on ... "going to war on your enemies." In its most basic sense, the text gives us instructions as to how we are to act in battle against our enemies. The word "*al*" though can have other connotations. If we translate the text to read "*al*" as "above" (using on to mean on top of), we can argue that the Torah commands us to war over our foes. This would be a call to rise above the enemy in the midst of war. In other words, the command does not involve going to war against someone, rather fighting the war above them. We are to rise above the horror that causes war and not succumb to getting stuck in it.

Where we apply this message to our daily lives, we speak not of a physical war against some external enemy, rather the daily battle that we wage in our attempt to be whole. Where we give into our infirmities, we get stuck and we lose. As we think beyond our ailments and think of the ethical "battlefront" that we maintain daily, hoping life makes sense, the text refers to our moral compass, our sense of self worth, our inner strength. Where we fail to recognize our own value we lose. When we let the outside world take control of us, we suffer. We suffer not just emotionally, but physically, as well. If one half of healing is emotional, so too, is the path to illness and infirmity. It absolutely is the stuff that plagues our minds that brings the greatest threat to our bodies. It is our failure to care for ourselves that causes our body to decay. Stress kills. So, the text instructs us, "When we go into battle above our enemies, they are handed into our hands." Our job is to remain resolute, hopeful, and, strong. When we face each day with the resolution not only to survive, but to thrive, we cannot be held back. Whether our healing returns us to full strength or to a confidence that we can face and thrive through whatever

befalls us. We become whole when we find ourselves able to rise above the struggle and choose life, as much of it as we can. Shabbat Shalom.