

**Battle Plans: How to Defeat the Yetzer Hara (2009)**

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Army intelligence is as important to the **Israel Defense Forces** as its elite combat units. Intelligence, includes, among other things intercepting the enemy's communications and then properly decoding them. The most crack combat unit in the world cannot win a battle if intelligence fails to appraise it of the enemy's plans and strategies. In the same way, we cannot hope to **defeat the Yetzer Hara** [GZB: evil inclination] without intelligence: becoming aware of the enemy's strategy and properly decoding its messages. The Maharal [GZB: Judah Loew ben Bezalel, 1526- 1609] starts his treatise: On "The Power of the *Yetzer Hara*" by breaking the code of the *Yetzer Hara's* messages to us.

**R. Jacob Joseph of Polonoye (1710–1784)**

**Sefer Toledot Jacob Joseph, Potion Bo – 12**

And so a man may come in any way to the (spiritual) level mentioned above, he must check himself. Consulting man is this: that a man is made up of good and evil, the body prone to other physical and material pleasures and soul tends for things spiritual. And he must subdue the material that it should lean to spiritual things. And in that he is composed of material form, he must break his desire of all physical pleasure, and choose the path of Torah, that is, bread and salt, and water sparingly, sleeping: On the ground, and a sorrowful life he must live, then you are (truly) fortunate and good for you. Fortunate are you in this world and good for the World to Come (Avot 6). And it has already been challenged by the commentators, what is he good in this world? And in accordance with our words, it seems to me that a man has no greater sorrow than the constant great war that is against the evil inclination that does not rest day or night, **as in the statement of the sage: You have returned from a small war, prepare yourselves now a major war, etc."** Here the evil inclination arises: Only from food and drink and the material pleasures, as it is written, "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked (Deuteronomy 32:15)." And as it is written, "And you shall be satisfied and your hearts will grow haughty Deuteronomy 8:14)." But when he lives in the way of the Torah, as mentioned above, the evil inclination has no opening to come to him and provoke him, and then he has rest from the great war as well as the sorrow of the evil inclination, and it is good for him in this world when he has quiet rest from the Great war.

**ר' יעקב יוסף מפולנאה**

**ספר תולדות יעקב יוסף פרשת בא - יב**

וכדי שיוכל האדם לבוא על כל פנים למדריגה הנ"ל, שיבדוק את עצמו, עצה היעוצה לאדם הוא זה, כי האדם כלול מטוב ורע, הגוף נוטה אחר החומרי ותענוגי הגשמי, והנשמה נוטה אחר דברים רוחני, וכדי להכניע חומרו שינטה גם כן לדברים רוחניים, ושיהיה נעשה מן החומר צורה, צריך האדם לשבר תאוותו מכל תענוגי גשמיים, ולבחור בדרכה של תורה שהיא כך, פת במלח, ומים במשורה, ועל הארץ תישן, וחיי צער תחיה, אז אשריך וטוב לך אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לעולם הבא (אבות פ"ו). וכבר הקשו המפרשים בזה, מאי הוא הטוב בעולם הזה. ולדברינו נראה לי, כי אין לאדם צער יותר מצער המלחמה הגדולה התמידי שהוא עם היצר הרע אשר יומם ולילה לא ישבות, **כמאמר החכם שבתם ממלחמה קטנה הכינו עצמיכם למלחמה גדולה וכו'.** והנה אין היצר הרע מתעורר רק מתוך מאכל ומשתה ותענוגי הגשמיים, כמ"ש וישמן ישורן ויבעט (דברים לב, טו), וכמ"ש ואכלת ושבעת ורם לבבך וגו' (דברים ח, יד), אבל כשנוהג בדרך התורה הנ"ל אין לו ליצר הרע מבוא לבוא אצלו להתגרות בו, ולכך יש לו מנוחה ממלחמה הגדולה והצער של היצר הרע, וטוב לו בעולם הזה גם כן שהוא בהשקט ומנוחה ממלחמה הגדולה:

R. Bahye Ibn Paquda (written c. 1040/1080)  
The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart  
Gate: On the Pure Devotion of All Acts to God Alone, Part 5

רבינו בחיי אבן פקודה  
ספר חובות הלבבות  
שער יחוד המעשה פ"ה

It was told of a *Hasid* [GZB: pietist] that he met some men returning from a battle with an enemy with spoils. He said to them: "You are returning, from a small battle, carrying your booty. Now prepare yourself for a great battle." They asked him: "What is that great battle?" He answered them: "The battle against the instinct and its armies."

ואמרו על חסיד שפגע אנשים שבים ממלחמת אויבים ושלוו שלל אחר מלחמה חזקה. אמר להם: שבתם מן המלחמה הקטנה שוללים שלל התעתדו למלחמה הגדולה. אמרו לו: ומה היא המלחמה הגדולה? אמר להם: מלחמת היצר וחייליו.

Abul Hassan Ali Hajvari (990-1072)

Kashf Al Mahjub (Revelation of the Veiled) - Discourse: On the Mortification of the Lower Soul

God has said: "Those who strive to the utmost (*jáhádú*) for Our sake, We will guide them into Our ways (Quran - Surat Al-'Ankabut:69)." And the Prophet said: "The (*mujáhid*) is he who struggles with all his might against *jáhada nafsahu* for God's sake." And he also said: "We have returned from *al-jihád al-aşghar* (the lesser war) to the *al-jihád al-akbar* (greater war). On being asked, "What is the greater war?" he replied, "It is the struggle against one's self (*mujáhádat al-nafs*)." Thus the Apostle adjudged the mortification of the lower soul to be superior to the Holy War against unbelievers, because the former is more painful. You must know, then, that the way of mortification is plain and manifest, for it is approved by men of all religions and sects, and is observed and practised by the Sufis in particular; and the term "mortification (*mujáhadat*)" is current among Sufis of every class, and the Shaykhs have uttered many sayings on this topic. Sahl b. 'Abdalláh Tustarí carries the principle to an extreme point. It is related that he used to break his fast: Only: Once in fifteen days, and he ate but little food in the course of his long life. While all mystics have affirmed the need of mortification, and have declared it to be an indirect means of attaining contemplation Sahl asserted that mortification is the direct cause of the latter, and he attributed to search a powerful effect: On attainment, so that he even regarded the present life, spent in search, as superior to the future life of fruition. "If," he said, "you serve God in this world, you will attain proximity to Him in the next world: without that service there would not be this proximity: it follows that self-mortification, practised with the aid of God, is the direct cause of union with God."