

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Understanding Torah Society

Part 3 – Public Goods – Defense

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:4

“For YHWH your Elohim is He that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Part two of this series examined the first concept of the six public goods—*order*. To refresh our memory, the six public goods as commonly seen by government today are 1) order, 2) defense, 3) public health, 4) infrastructure, 5) education, and 6) social welfare. This study will focus upon defense, specifically of Israel, a society which is supposed to be based upon Torah.

The very first thing that needs to be understood about a true Torah society is that it is YHWH who has charged Himself with her defense. Since this is true, there are certain things that need to be understood about the defense of Israel pertaining to the involvement of its people.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:2

“And it shall be, when you draw near unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people,”

When it comes to waging war against another nation, YHWH through His Torah has given Israel some very specific instructions He fully expects her to follow. When she does, then order is maintained and He is fully able to bless Israel in ways she has rarely seen manifested in her long sordid history of following YHWH. One of those ways in which YHWH shall bless Israel, is that He will protect her from other nations. Other nations shall not prevail against her.

In the passage above, it is instructive to take note of several things. First, please note that when it is time for Israel to go into battle, then the reigning high priest is supposed to speak to all the people (men of war) gathered. YHWH even specifies what the high priest is supposed to say to the men of war gathered at that time.

Also, please note that throughout this process, no human king is present or involved in this process of going to war. Human government is simply not needed as represented by a king.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:3

"and shall say unto them, 'Hear, Israel, you draw near this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your heart faint; fear not, nor tremble, neither you be afraid of them;'"

There are four passages in the book of Devarim which contain the phrase "shema Yisrael" (hear Israel), and one of those passages has this phrase twice for a total of five times. The passage above is the last "shema Yisrael" phrase in the book of Devarim.

The high priest is to remind the people gathered for battle that there is absolutely no need to fear, tremble, or be afraid of the enemy. This is true because of what the high priest says next.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:4

"For YHWH your Elohim is He that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

It is not Israel who fights and wins the battles in which she engages with her enemies, but rather, it is YHWH our Elohim who goes before us and fights on our behalf. When Israel is walking in harmony with YHWH and with each other, then it is impossible for her ever to lose a battle. It is not who has the biggest army, or the most advanced weapons who shall win a respective battle. Victory is about living in harmony with YHWH through loving obedience to His Torah commandments. When Israel does that, then she cannot lose.

Also, please note that the victory won by YHWH is not just simply a victory over her enemies, but it is unto salvation in every sense of the word.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:5

"And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, 'What man is there that has built a new house, and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.'"

After the high priest is finished reminding all the people gathered for battle that YHWH has already won the victory and that they are simply there to witness that victory, the officers have some very specific instructions they are to give to all the men of war.

First, if a man has recently built a house and has not yet moved into it, then he is excused and cannot fight this day. He is to return home. However, before he can return home, for all things to be done in the proper orderly fashion, he must show up for the muster of the people called for battle. No man has a right to take it upon himself to decide that he does not need to show up for battle. Every man must show up, and then as the Torah specified instructions are given, he may then return home.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:6

“And what man is there that has planted a vineyard, and has not used the fruit thereof? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man use the fruit thereof.”

Furthermore, if a man has recently planted a vineyard and has not yet had a harvest from that vineyard, then he is to be dismissed and return home. This is not his day to fight. Please remember, as discussed above, such a man must show up to hear these instructions and then be dismissed. This maintains proper order in a Torah society.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:7

“And what man is there that has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.”

If a man is engaged and not yet married, then he is not to fight in the battle of that day.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:5

“When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out in the host, neither shall he be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer his wife whom he has taken.

Furthermore, for a period of one year after being married, he shall not fight in the armies (host) of Israel. However, as was pointed out above, when the people are called together for battle, he still must show up for muster. Afterward, he shall be dismissed according to Torah.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:8

“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, ‘What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart melt as his heart.’”

The final instructions from the officers shall include that if any man is afraid for any reason whatsoever, then he is excused. He is to return home. He cannot fight that day. Therefore, if any man for any reason thinks that he should not be there, all he has to do is say he is afraid and he shall be sent home. It is better in the eyes of YHWH to have just a few men who are fully prepared to go into battle, than to have a great host whose minds are not focused upon YHWH and the victory He has already given in the battle at hand. For a man to be properly focused in this context, is for that man to know without any doubts whatsoever that YHWH has already won the victory. If a man has any doubt, then he should go home and not fight in that battle.

Let us remind ourselves of the account of Gideon, who went through this process. At the beginning of the process, thirty-two thousand men had showed up for battle. After sending the first group of twenty-two thousand back to their homes, YHWH told Gideon that the ten thousand left was still too many for Him to give victory. YHWH had Gideon take the men

through an additional weeding out step; He had Gideon take the men to the stream and watch how they drank water from the stream. When all was said and done, Gideon only had three hundred men left. It was exactly how many men YHWH needed to give the victory. The defense of Israel is not a numbers game or a game of strength of armaments. It is all about faith and obedience to His Voice. (Read a more detailed [study about Gideon here.](#))

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:9

“And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall appoint captains of hosts at the head of the people.”

After all those who need to go home are sent home, then the captains are appointed. This seems to indicate that the captains may not always be the same men. YHWH shall raise up whom He shall at the time He needs for them to be raised up in that season.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:14

“But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shall you take for a prey unto yourself; and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies, which YHWH your Elohim has given you.”

As a reward for their faith in YHWH, specifically that He won before the battle even started, the few who remain after the weeding out process are to keep the spoils of war. That is, if the spoils of war has not previously been placed under a ban.

The spoils of war act as payment for their service to YHWH in this matter.

Standing armies cost money—a lot of money. It costs money to feed and equip them. However, Israel is not supposed to have any standing army. Every single able-bodied man is considered a “man of war,” and when the call to muster goes forth throughout all Israel, every single man is supposed to show up. Then the process outlined in Torah of selecting who shall fight in that particular battle is implemented. Those who go home do not need to be paid. Those who stay to fight need to be paid, and YHWH does that through the spoils of war.

As we have seen in this study, when one lives in a true Torah society, then there is no need for any standing army, which, by the way, is the greatest expense of human governments. However, when each person chooses to live according to Torah, then the need for a human government simply vanishes. Israel does not live in fear of the nations around her because it is YHWH who has charged Himself with her protection.

May we see the realization of this truth come to pass in our day and in our time!

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