



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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ROSH BAIS MEDRASH ENGLISH SPEAKING PROGRAM MACHON LEV

Soldiers Fighting Midyan – Only Those Who Placed Shel Yad Before Shel Rosh

In Parshat Matot, Am Yisrael prepare for war with Midyan. Rashi claims that those drafted were Tzadkim- righteous individuals. The Midrash describes all 12,000 soldiers who went to battle with Midyan as follows: *“none of them placed their tefillin shel Rosh before their tefillin shel yad.”*

The Netivat Shalom inquires as to the significance of this statement. Selecting soldiers that wore tefillin may highlight their religious observance, but what is the significance of specifying that these soldiers did not adorn the tefillin shel rosh **prior** to wrapping themselves with the tefillin shel yad?

We have two major senses that control

how we feel, our heart and our mind. We need to channel and subjugate both to our avodat Hashem. This is what tefillin is all about. As we state in the tefilla prior to putting on tefillin (לשם יחוד) - we first wrap tefillin around our arm, next to our heart, only thereafter, do we place it on our head, near our mind. We first need to conquer our desires, then we will be able to think clearly. At times, we fall victim to our desires and seek to rationalize our decisions so that we can fulfill our cravings.

Fighting Midyan required individuals that could overcome their desires. Bilam sought to entice Am Yisrael with the women of Moav. Therefore, the soldiers selected to confront Bilam had to put on their *tefillin shel yad before their tefillin shel rosh*. They had to be able to control their hearts desires and channel them to avodat Hashem. Only then, could their mind properly and clearly be directed towards serving God.

On Shabbat we do not wear tefillin. In fact, the acronym of שבת – may be understood as shabbat replacing tefillin. שבת במקום תפילין. Shabbat achieves the same purpose. On Shabbat our desires are channeled to

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oneg Shabbat- 'ה אז תתענג על ה' and our mind is focused properly – נפשי חולת אהבתך. On Shabbat we are able to feel and think straight and sanctify the day appropriately.

As we put on our tefillin, may we be able to comprehend the significance of *the shel yad and shel rosh*, and be able to conquer our desires and think clearly so that we can act as proper soldiers in serving our creator. ■



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