



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS NCSY ISRAEL



**RAV SHLOMO
ZALMAN RAYMAN**
BEIT SHEMESH DIRECTOR

WAR AND PEACE, OR PEACE AND WAR?

Living through what feels like a never-ending series of wars, there is a promise in this week's Parsha that feels too good to be true. If we follow Hashem's Torah and keep His mitzvot, ונתתי שלום בארץ, there will be peace in the land. But the very next pasuk tells us, "and you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword." Wait a second-if there is peace in the land, why are we still chasing enemies? Is the Torah promising us a "peace" that involves constant fighting?

Perhaps the pesukim are actually out of order. The peace the Torah speaks of is achieved through a decisive military victory. But why put the promise of peace before the description of the battle?

The Torah is teaching us a fundamental idea: the war is never the reward. Sometimes, reality demands that we fight. But the Torah

puts the word *shalom* first to remind us where our hearts should be.

As teens living in Israel today, it's easy to get used to the language of conflict and let war become our new normal. This Parsha reminds us to keep our eyes on the prize. We perform mitzvot and stay connected to our values so that we merit the first half of the promise. May the time come soon when we achieve a complete *shalom ba'aretz*, a peace so whole and so permanent that the second verse-the need to pick up the sword and chase our enemies-becomes a thing of the past.



TALYA BRONSTEIN
9TH GRADE, BEIT SHEMESH

THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

There are many different mitzvot related to agriculture in Eretz Yisrael. The mitzvah of *shmitta*, which is discussed in this week's parsha, is one of them. Every seven years, farmers are forbidden from working the land and must take a period of rest. The Torah refers to the mitzvah of *shmitta* as a "Shabbat," just like the Shabbat that religious Jews observe every week.

However, there is a difference. Regarding Shabbat, the Torah says that a Jewish person must rest and not do any melacha. By *shmitta*, however, the language that the Torah uses is "ושבתה הארץ"-the land shall rest. The Torah puts the land, and not the farmer, at the center of the mitzvah of *shmitta*.

This teaches us something important about

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the land of Israel. It's not just dead soil or the place where the Jewish people happen to live—rather, the Torah considers it a living entity. So much so that every seven years, it needs a year of rest!


HaRav Kook takes this idea one step further. The land of Israel is not just a living entity—it is the second half of the Jewish people's soul. Just as when two people get married, it is the intertwining of two souls coming together, so too with the Jewish people and the land of Israel. The land completes the soul of the people, and the people complete the land.

May we be zoche to experience this harmony fully in our lives! ■

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