



# The Missing Half

*Why we aren't afraid of our enemies.*

## The Famous Slogan

“Let My People Go.” If you grew up before the 1980s, you remember this line very well.

In the early 1970s, Jews throughout the world staged protests on behalf of their oppressed brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union and demanded that the Russian government let them go free. The slogan they rallied around was “Let My People Go.”

However, the Rebbe pointed out that a very important element was missing. People seemed to have forgotten the end of the verse: “...so that they may serve Me.” The purpose of the Exodus from Egypt wasn't just to gain freedom, but to accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvot and have the opportunity to serve G-d.

This wasn't just an argument over a correct citation; it was an argument about the general approach.

Helping Jews leave Russia was obviously important, but the Rebbe stressed that the real goal was to enable them to live as Jews. In Russia, they couldn't hold a brit milah, celebrate a bar mitzvah, or have a Jewish wedding. So, the American Jews who fought for their freedom were also responsible to ensure that their liberation would now allow them to observe Jewish life—celebrate holidays and give their children a Jewish education. Instead, the efforts were focused mainly on physical needs, like housing and employment. The ultimate purpose, “that they may serve Me,” was left to the wayside.

## The Other Missing Line

This reminded me of another missing citation, which pertains to the situation in Israel.

Two years after the Six-Day War, in the summer of 1969, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan gave a speech to IDF officers that reverberated around the world.

In his talk, he shared that he had addressed a visiting group of Jewish supporters from abroad. During a question-answer session, they asked him many questions on military affairs, technical matters, and lots more. But then came the hardest question in yiddish: “Mr. Defense Minister, Vos vet zayn der sof? What’s going to be?”

At that time, Israel was in the midst of the War of Attrition which began after the Six-Day War and lasted over three years. During this period, both sides wore each other down through continuous skirmishes and targeted operations.

The Egyptian army repeatedly shelled Israeli positions along the Suez Canal, while the Jordanian army regularly bombarded the kibbutzim and moshavim in the Beit She’an Valley and the Jordan Valley. These communities were forced to live under a total blackout at night to avoid Jordanian shelling. During the 17 months of fighting in the War of Attrition, nearly a thousand Israelis were killed!

With this in mind, the American Jewish visitors posed their question: “What will be the end of this?”

Dayan pointed out that, understandably, what everyone really wants to know is not just how we will win the war, but more importantly, how we will achieve peace. All the world’s great powers were focused on solving the crisis in the Middle East. But was that actually a feasible goal?

At this point, Dayan suddenly turned into a rabbi.

This question, “what will be?” he said, was born with the first Jew, our forefather Abraham. G-d commanded Abraham to go to the land of Israel, and promised that it would become his. It seemed that Abraham was expected to conquer the land of ten nations—yet he was only one. He didn’t even have a son. So, Abraham turned to G-d with the eternal Jewish question: “What will be?” And then, G-d revealed Himself to Abraham and reassured him. “*Al tirah*, Do not fear, Abram,” G-d told him.

In the next generation, Isaac also had to face challenges. Isaac lived in the land of the Philistines and dealt with anti-Semitism there. He had disputes with the locals over water sources, which were crucial in the desert. Isaac dug one well, but the Philistines claimed it as theirs. He

dug another well, and again, there was a dispute. Life was difficult, but then God appeared to Isaac and told him, “I am the G-d of your father Abraham. Do not fear” (Genesis 26:24). These same words were later spoken to Jacob: “Do not fear, my servant Jacob.” This phrase became the enduring motto of the Jewish people.

It is true, Dayan said, there is constant anxiety for the fate of the Jewish people. We worry over the physical survival of the Jew, and worry about the spiritual concern that they might assimilate. At the time, for example, there was anxiety about the physical safety of Jews in Iraq, and about the spiritual wellbeing of Jews in Russia. There was only one answer to the problem, Dayan said. It is unlikely that Israel would turn into Switzerland or Scandinavia. The only answer to the question “What will be?” is “to keep fighting.” In a war, he said, the most important thing is to remember this message: “Do not fear.”

Turning to the commanders, he concluded, “You all know too well that a war can be waged even in the face of difficulties. You can fight even when there isn’t enough money, manpower, or technological resources. But one thing you cannot do is fight when you are afraid. ‘Do not fear, My servant Jacob,’ is a call not to let fear overwhelm you—because a heavy and prolonged battle awaits you.”

## **The Rebbe’s Response**

A few weeks later, during a farbrengen on Parshat Shoftim in 1969, the Rebbe addressed Moshe Dayan’s speech. The Rebbe noted that a speaker in Israel had said that the first condition for going to war is “Do not fear.”

But why not? Dayan quoted verses from the Torah that tell us not to fear the enemy, but he didn’t explain why. The enemy is indeed larger and stronger than us, so why shouldn’t we be afraid?

The Rebbe pointed out that Dayan missed the second part of the verse: “Do not fear them, because the Lord your God is with you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 20:1). The Torah explicitly states that there is no need to fear—because God is with you.

There is no logical explanation for why we shouldn’t be afraid. The only explanation, the Rebbe said, is ‘because the Lord your God is with you.’”

The Rebbe pointed out that some people think faith is only needed within a Jewish context, for observing Torah and mitzvot, and for

everything else, reason and logic should suffice. The opposite is true, he said. The only way not to be afraid of the many enemies around the Jewish people is by having faith in G-d. Logically, we have no chance against such large numbers; the reason we can stand strong is because G-d is with us. (Torat Menachem 5729, p. 321).

Let's not forget the second half of the verse.

Even today, as enemies attack the Jewish people from all sides, we know that the answer is the same: G-d is with us. As the prophet Isaiah tells us in this week's haftarah: "No weapon formed against you shall succeed." No weapon of war will destroy the Jewish people. Why? Because the Creator of the world protects us.

Good Shabbos.

*(Based on Jewish Insights for Parshas Mishpatim, 5784)*