

Who is the man who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it. (20:5)

An individual whose mind is not on the battle, will – due to his fear or lack of enthusiasm – erode the morale of his comrades. The Torah mentions those individuals who return home and are free from joining the army. These are men who had just initiated an endeavor: taken a wife; built a house; planted a vineyard. For practical reasons, their minds are focused elsewhere – not on the battlefield. *Rashi* remarks concerning one who has built a house and has yet to move in: He is anxious concerning the possibility that he might die and someone else might move into his un-lived property.

Imagine – a person is more concerned that someone else will move into his un-lived house than his possible death at the hands of the enemy! Does this make sense? Is this person rational? Is he more obsessed with his house than he is with his life? The *Gerrer Rebbe, zl*, explains that the issue is regarding what occupies his mind in his last moments. If he is mortally wounded, what will course through his mind: thoughts of *teshuvah*, repentance, or concern that someone else will take over his home? It sounds insane, but apparently this is human nature. The mind processes what impacts it at the immediate moment – and, at that moment, the soldier is more concerned about his house than he is about his life.

When a person confronts the most important moment of his life, in fact, his very last moment of life, his mind should be occupied with something more significant than who will live in his house. *Maayanah Shel Torah* quotes the *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* 30, who says: Death by thirst is unusual, it is the most difficult of all causes and forms of death. Why? The author explains: a person who is dying of thirst thinks that all that he needs in order to live is a drop of water. Thus, at the very last moments of his life, what courses through his mind: “A drop of water is all that I need. One drop of water, and I will live.” His mind is preoccupied with nothing else other than his obsession with a drop of water. Obviously, a G-d-fearing Jew, regardless of his elevated spiritual status, should have something more important on his mind.