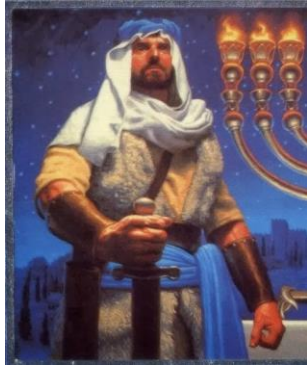


# My Favorite Quotes Revealing Hebrew Warriorship as a Foundational Aspect of our Israeli/Judean Identity

Michael S. Bar-Ron



*Disclaimers: Whereas I have made great efforts to maintain precious training and traditions I learned and taught; I have not been a teacher of Abir/Qesheth Warrior Arts© since 2008. I am simply promoting these Habbani-Yemenite teachings and values as they are the heritage of all Israel. Furthermore, I do not condone any illegal or immoral use of violence or weaponry. Do not break the laws of your country.*

The following is a *partial* list – by no means complete – of quotes from traditional sources that reveal what a foundational aspect of our Hebrew/Israelite/Judean/Jewish identity is **the knowledge and practice of warriorship**. Knowing how to protect your own life and those of others. How to defend your family and be able to fight for your country, should the need arise. No, it is not merely something “permitted”, or a skill that “need not contradict a life of Torah”. On the contrary, it is a foundational aspect of our identity.

Think about one of the common titles of HaShem (YHWH) our God in the Torah: יהוה צבאות – HaShem of Legions. **Those legions are us.**

Note how, in Exodus 18,21, when Jethro advised Moses to create a judicial system for Israel’s tribes, of all the character traits he advises him to look for, he mentions חיל אנשי -- “mighty men” first!

”וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֶה מִכָּל הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי חֵיל יִרְאַי אֱלֹהִים, אַנְשֵׁי אִמְת--שֹׁנְאֵי בָצַע; וְשֹׂמְרֵי עֲלֵהֶם, שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שְׂרֵי מֵאוֹת, שְׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים, וְשְׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת.”

Moreover, seek out of all the nation **mighty men** (warriors) that fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them to be officers over captains, officers over hundreds, officers over fifties, and officers of tens.

What does Moses actually do, when the Torah describes his putting the advice into action? See Exodus 18,25. Moses simply takes אנשי חיל – mighty men (warriors) – with no further description – to serve as his justices.

What is it that Moses understood that Jethro did not? Perhaps it is something preserved in ancient Habbani-Yemenite tradition: that, **by definition, it can be assumed that a true Hebrew warrior espouses the other great qualities.**

Unlike the soldiers of other nations, our warriors, simply by virtue of their fighting in the spirit of our culture, our faith, they are naturally “men of truth” and “haters of false gain”. They know they that death is not the end, that their soul will be Judged. In fact, it is the very nature of our unique warrior culture that inculcates in them those noblest of character traits. Including compassion and self-control.

Can we imagine how attractive yeshivas and seminaries would be – how low the fallout rate among young people – if martial arts and weapons training (in accordance with the law, of course [!]) was restored a foundational Torah value, made part and parcel with a traditional Torah education?

Is it any coincidence that when the nation would have its first fall into assimilation into Canaanite ways, that the Book of Judges also remarks how HaShem gave them a reality of non-stop warfare, simply in order for them to keep up their training?

We will begin our list with that precisely that quote:

## 1. The Importance to HaShem that Future Generations of Israel Remain Trained in Warfare

וְאֵלֶּה הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִנִּיחַ יְהוָה לְנִסּוֹת בָּם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אֵת כָּל מַלְחָמוֹת כְּנָעַן : רַק לְמַעַן דַּעַת דְּרוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְלַמְּדָם מַלְחָמָה רַק אֲשֶׁר לְפָנִים לֹא יָדְעוּם : (שופטים ג:א-ב)

Now these are the nations that *HaShem* left by which to test Israel, all those who never knew all the wars [for the conquest] of Cana`an. ***This was only in order that the [future] generations of the children of Israel might know, that they be trained warfare, only since they had not known war previously.***  
(Judges 3:1-2)



## 2. We Lost Our Kingdom and Temple for Delving into Astrology Rather than Training in the Art of Warfare

וזו היא שאבדה מלכותנו והחריבה בית מקדשנו והאריכה גלותינו והגיעתנו עד הלום. שאבותינו חטאו ואינם, לפי שמצאו ספרים רבים באלה הדברים של דברי החוזים בכוכבים, שדברים אלו הם עיקר עבודה זרה, כמו שביארנו בהלכות עבודה זרה, טעו ונהו אחריהן, ודימו שהם חכמות מפוארות ויש בהן תועלת גדולה, **ולא נתעסקו בלמידת מלחמה ולא בכיבוש ארצות**, אלא דמו שאותן הדברים יועילו להם ולפיכך קראו אותם הנביאים סכלים ואווילים. ודאי סכלים ואווילים היו, ואחרי התוהו אשר לא יועילו הלכו. (רמב"ם, איגרת לחכמי קהל עיר מארשילייה, צרפת)

<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/mahshevt/mekorot/igeret-2.htm> (מנוסח האיגרת המופיע ב-)

This is why our kingdom was lost and our Temple was destroyed and why we were brought to this; for our fathers sinned and are no more because they found many books dealing with these themes of the star gazers, these things being the root of idolatry, as we have made clear in Laws Concerning Idolatry. They erred and were drawn after them, imagining them to be glorious science and to be of great utility. **They did not busy themselves with the art of war or with the conquest of lands**, but imagined that those studies would help them. Therefore the prophets called them "fools and dolts" (Jer. 4:22). And truly fools they were, "for they walked after confused things that do not profit" (I Sam. 12:21 and Jer. 2:8).

*(RaMBaM, Epistle to the Sages of Marseilles, France)*

*(Translation from A Maimonides Reader by Isadore Twersky, Behrman House Inc. 1989 494 pp. [page 465])*





### 3. Torah References to Traditional Tribal Warriorship of the People of Israel

דָּן יִדִין עִמּוֹ כְּאַחַד שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל : יְהִי דָן נֶחֱשׁ עַלֵי דָרֶךְ שְׁפִיפּוֹן עַלֵי אַרְח הַנֶּשֶׁף עֵקֶבִי  
סוֹס וַיִּפֹּל רֶכְבוֹ אַחֲוֹר לִישׁוּעַתְךָ קוֹיֵתִי יְהוָה : גַּד גְּדוּד יְגוּדְנִי וְהוּא יְגַד עֵקֶב :  
(בראשית מט: יז-יט)

Dan will execute justice for [or “judge”] his people as one of the tribes of Israel. May Dan be like a snake along the road, a viper along the path that bites the ankles of a horse and its rider falls down backwards. I will hope for your salvation, *HaShem*. Gad: a [enemy] troop shall troop upon him, but he shall troop [surround with a troop] as a heel [from behind].  
(Genesis 49:17-19) <sup>2</sup>

*Commentary of the MaLBiM, (HaRav Meir Livush ben YeHiel Michel [1809-1879], called “haTorah wa-ha-MiSwah”, Demonstrating how the Oral Tradition is Implicit in the Biblical Text* <sup>3</sup>

(טז) דָּן. דָּן הִיָּה הַמְּאַסֵּף לְכָל הַמַּחֲנוֹת, וּבְנֵי גַד הִלְכוּ בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּחֲנוֹת, דָּן הִיָּה צָרִיךְ לְשׁוּר מֵהָאוֹיְבִים הַנוֹפְלִים מֵאַחֲוֹרֵי הַמַּחֲנֶה וּמִזְנָבִים אֶת כָּל הַנְּחַשְׁלִים, אֹמֵר שֶׁדָּן יִדִין וְיִרִיב רֵיב עִמּוֹ בְּכָל הַשְּׁבֵטִים הַגָּם שֶׁהוֹלֵךְ לְבִסּוֹף.

Dan was the rearguard of all the tribal camps, and the children of Gad walked at the head of all the tribal camps. **Dan needed to guard against enemies that would fall upon the rear of the camp, trailing after those who had fallen behind.** This [verse] goes to say that Dan will execute judgment and will take up the fight of his people, including those who walk behind.

(יז-יח) יְהִי דָּן. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַנוֹפְלִים עַל הַמַּחֲנֶה מֵאַחֲוֹרֵיהֶם הֵם רוֹכְבֵי סוֹסִים שֶׁהֵם מְגִיעִים בְּרִדְפָּה בְּרֹאשׁוֹנָה, יִצִּיר שְׁמִלּוּמַד לְלַחֹם אֶת רוֹכְבֵי סוֹסִים, הַגָּם שֶׁהֵם יִלְכוּ רִגְלִי, וְיִדְמּוּ כְּנַחֲשׁ עָרוֹם, בְּדָרֶךְ הַגְּדוֹל יִדְמּוּ כְּנַחֲשִׁים גְּדוֹלִים, וּבְאַרְח שֶׁהוּא הַהוֹלֵךְ אֶל הַצֵּד, יִלְכוּ כְּשִׁפִּיפּוֹן קֶטֶן הַהוֹלֵךְ בַּהֲסֵתֵר, וְשִׁנִּיָּהֶם הַגָּם שֶׁהֵם זוֹחֲלִים עַל הָאָרֶץ יִנְצְחוּ רוֹכְבֵי סוֹסִים בְּמֵה שְׁנוֹשֵׁךְ עֵקֶבִי סוֹס וַיִּפֹּל רֶכְבוֹ אַחֲוֹר, כֵּן יִהְיוּ מְלּוּמְדִים לְקַצֵּץ בְּחֶרֶב רִגְלֵי הַסּוֹסִים וַיִּפְּלוּ הַרוֹכְבִּים בִּידְיָהֶם, וּבְאַשֶׁר צִוּר זֶה שִׁבֵּא הָאוֹיֵב מֵאַחֲוֹרֵי הַמַּחֲנֶה הוּא בַּעַת שִׁירְדוֹף הָאוֹיֵב אַחֲרֵיהֶם, שְׁזֶה בַּעַת שֶׁהֵם חֹלְשִׁים נֶגַד הָאוֹיֵב, אִמֵּר לִישׁוּעַתְךָ קוֹיֵתִי ה'.

**May Dan be.** Since those who [would] fall upon the camp from behind were mounted horsemen who would approach at the first charge, [the verse] illustrates how, although being on foot, they were trained to fight against mounted horsemen, and would resemble a cunning snake: **“Along the highway” they would resemble large snakes,** and **“along the footpath”**, which is along the side of the road, they would move like a small viper, walking stealthily. Both of them, ‘crawling’ on the ground, would defeat mounted horsemen, as in [the verse] **“[Dan] bites the ankles of a horse and its rider falls down backwards.” --For they were trained to cut down the legs of horses, so their riders would fall into their hands.** And when this scenario, in which the enemy would come from behind the camp, would be at a time when the enemy is chasing after them—which would be a time when they are weak against the enemy—he [Jacob] said, **“I will hope for your salvation, HaShem.”**

(יט) גד. אולם גד ילכו גדודים בראש המחנה, ובזה היו שני מיני גדודים, הגדוד שהולך ללחום, והגדוד שהולך בצד המחנה לסבב את האויב זה נקרא עקבו של המחנה ע"ש שמעקב וסובב את האויב, כמ"ש 'וישימו העם את כל המחנה אשר מצפון לעיר ואת עקבו מים לעיר' (יהושע ח:יג) כמש"פ שם, אומר שגד יהיה הגדוד שיגוד נוכח האויב, ועז"א גדוד יגודנו פי' את האויב וגם הוא יגד וישם גדוד של העקב והמארב לסבב את האויב משני צדדים.

**Gad.** However, Gad would advance as battalions at the *head* of the camp. **As such they would divide [their force] into two battalions: the battalion that would go [straight] into combat, and the battalion that would advance along the side of the camp to encircle the enemy,** which was called the "heel" (עקב) of the camp—as it would go from behind (מעקב) and surround the enemy, as it is written: "So the people set themselves in array, all the host that was to the north of the city, their rear lying in wait to the west of the city" (Joshua 8:13) As I wrote in my commentary there, this is to say that Gad will be the battalion that wraps around, facing the enemy. Regarding this it is said, "a troop shall troop upon him" (referring to the enemy), and he [Gad] will also 'troop', placing battalions both for "the heel" and the ambush, to surround the enemy from both sides.

(Original Hebrew from Sefer Torath E-lohim `Im Pirush ha-MaLBiM, Sefer B'reshith, 'ha-Torah wa-ha-Miswah' by HaRav Meir Livush ben YeHiel Michel, S.L. Molo"th u-MisHar Books Inc., B'nei B'raq.)



#### 4. Reference to a Traditional Hebrew Fighting Art in Book of Samuel

וַיִּקְרָא דָּוִד אֶת הַקִּינָה הַזֹּאת עַל שָׂאוּל וְעַל יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנוֹ : וַיֹּאמֶר לְלִמֹּד בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה  
קִשְׁתַּת הַיָּהּ כְּתוּבָה עַל-סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר : (שמואל ב, א:יח)

And David cried this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, saying:  
**[The necessity] to teach the sons of Judah 'the bow'—behold, it is written in the Book of Yashar'. (Samuel II, 1:17-18) <sup>2</sup>**

-- The source in the Book of Yashar, in its latest form:

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל יְהוּדָה : יָדַעְתִּי בְנֵי כִי גִבִיר לֵאחִיךָ אַתָּה וּמֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם וּבְנִיךָ יִמְלְכוּ עַל  
בְּנֵיהֶם עַד עוֹלָם. **אֲךָ לִמֹּד נָא אֶת בְּנֵיךָ קִשְׁתַּת וְכָל כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָה** לְמַעַן יִלְחָמוּ אֶת מִלְחָמוֹת  
אַחֵיהֶם הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכָל אוֹיְבָיו. (ספר הישר לקדמונים, פרשת ויחי)

And Jacob spoke to Judah: 'I know, my son, that you are [destined to be] a master to your brothers and king over them, and your sons will reign over their sons forever. **Yet please teach your sons 'the bow' and every weapon of war**, in order that they will fight the wars of their brother the king, against all his enemies.'  
(The Book of Yashar, Parashath WayeHi) <sup>5</sup>

-- Qesheth/Qoshath means 'the bow'. This could mean archery, but per Ashkenazi and Habbani Yemenite Torah tradition, a martial art. See Rashi below:

Commentary to King David's words by Rash"i:

סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר : הֲלֹא הִיא כְּתוּבָה עַל סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית שֶׁהִיא סֵפֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל, אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וַיַּעֲקֹב?  
וְהִיכֵן רְמִיזָה— יָדָךְ בְּעוֹרֶף אוֹיְבֶיךָ. (בראשית מט:ח) -- **אִיזוֹ הִיא מִלְחָמָה שֶׁמְכוּיֵן בָּהּ  
יָדוֹ כְּנֹגֵד פְּדַחְתּוֹ שֶׁהוּא מוֹל עוֹרְפוֹ, הוּא אוֹמֵר קִשְׁתַּת. (פרוש רש"י לשמואל ב, א:יח)**

'The Book of Yashar': Behold it is written in the book on Genesis, which is the book of the upright ones, Abraham Isaac and Jacob. And where is it hinted to [in the Torah] — "[Judah,] your hand will strike at the neck of your enemies" (Genesis 49:8). **This is the warrior strategy in which the hand is aimed to strike against his neck [from behind, in a bow-like strike] while facing the front of his head [of the enemy], —behold this is 'the bow.'** [lit. 'the bow': the Hebrew martial art]

(Commentary of Rashi [Rav Shelomo YiS'hāqi 1040-1105 <sup>3</sup>] on Samuel II, 1:18)

Text according to N'vi'im u-Kh'thuvim Miqra'oth G'doloth haMe'ir LiYisra'el `im Pirush ha-MaLBiM, Sh'muel Aleph, 'haMeir LiYisra'el' Book Publishing (Sifrei Qodesh Ramath ElHanah), B'nei B'raq.



## 5. The Might of *Abirei Yisra'el*, Warriors of Israel, Fighting in HaShem's Name

ואַחֲרָיו הָיָה שָׁמְגָר בֶּן עֲנַת וַיִּדָּ אֶת פְּלִשְׁתִּים שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ בְּמִלְמַד הַבָּקָר וַיּוֹשַׁע גַּם-  
הוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל: (שופטים ג:לא)

And after him was Shamgar the son of 'Anath, who smote of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad; he also saved Israel. (Judges 3:31) <sup>1</sup>

וַיִּמְצָא לְחֵי חֲמֹר טְרִיָּה וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיִּדְבֶּה אֶלָּף אִישׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמֹשׁוֹן בְּלַחֵי  
הַחֲמֹר חֲמֹר חֲמֹרְתִים בְּלַחֵי הַחֲמֹר הַפִּיתִי אֶלָּף אִישׁ:  
(שופטים טו:טו-טז)

And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and he stretched out his hand and took it, and smote with it a thousand men. And Samson said: 'With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have struck down a military unit of men.' (Judges 15:15-16) <sup>1</sup>

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל כֹּה תֹאמְרוּ לְדָוִד אִין חֶפֶץ לְמִלָּךְ בְּמַהֲרָ כִּי בְמֵאָה עֶרְלוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים לְהִנָּקֵם  
בְּאֵיבֵי הַמִּלָּךְ וְשָׂאוּל חָשֵׁב לְהַפִּיל אֶת דָּוִד בְּיַד פְּלִשְׁתִּים: וַיִּגְדּוּ עֲבָדָיו לְדָוִד אֶת הַדְּבָרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁרַח הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי דָוִד לְהִתְחַתֵּן בְּמִלָּךְ וְלֹא מְלָאוּ הַיָּמִים: וַיִּקָּם דָּוִד וַיִּלָּךְ הוּא  
וַאֲנָשָׁיו וַיִּדָּ בַּפְּלִשְׁתִּים מֵאֲתִים אִישׁ וַיָּבֵא דָוִד אֶת עֶרְלֹתֵיהֶם וַיִּמְלְאוּם לְמִלָּךְ לְהִתְחַתֵּן  
בְּמִלָּךְ וַיִּתֵּן לוֹ שָׂאוּל אֶת מִיכַל בִּתּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: (שמואל א' יח:כה-כז)

And Saul said: 'Thus shall you say to David: The king does not desire any dowry but a hundred foreskins of Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies.' For Saul intended to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. And the given time frame had not yet expired; **and David arose and went, he and his men, and slew two hundred men of the Philistines;** and David brought their foreskins, and they gave their full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife. (Samuel I 18:25-27) <sup>1</sup>

**-- Food for thought: how did they do this? Answer: HaShem helped them. How? By virtue of their training, that that includes their bravery. They trained hard from their youth.**





## 6. Warriorship Simply for the Sake of Holding on to Our Home Then, Just as Now

לא ארץ נוכריה לקחנו ולא ברכוש זרים משלנו,  
כי אם נחלת אבותינו, אשר בידי אויבינו בעת מן העיתים בלא משפט נכבשה.  
ואנחנו כאשר הייתה לנו עת, הושיבנו נחלת אבותינו.  
(ספר מקבים א, טו, לג-לד)

"It is not a foreign land that we have taken, nor the property of  
strangers that we are taken control of,  
but the heritage of our forefathers, which at one point was  
conquered by our enemies unjustly.

So when we had the chance, we took back the heritage of our  
forefathers."

*(Yehudah HaMakabi [Judah the Maccabee, circa 140 BCE,  
I Maccabees 15,33-34)*





## 7. A Living Memory of the Bravery & Might of the Habbani Warriors Continues among Baladi Yemenite Jews

From a personal interview with Rav Yoseph Maghori Kohen shlit"a:

**”שאלה למארי: מה כבודו יכול לספר לי על החבאנים בתימן? אני חוקר אותם, ואני רוצה לדעת יותר עליהם.”**

”החבאנים היו גיבורים. שמעתי הרבה מזקנים בילדות שלי על החבאנים, על המלחמות שלהם, איך הם היו נלחמים על פי שמות. מה זה על פי שמות? --האותיות: היו עושים את צורת האותיות עם הידיים שלהם, ובוזה היו מנצחים. גם השרעבים—מן העיר שרעב—היו חזקים, אבל לא באותו רמה כמו החבאנים...”

**“A question for the Mori: What can you [lit. “his honor”] tell me about the Habbanis in Yemen? I am researching them and I want to know more about them.”**

“The Habbanis were mighty heroes. *I heard a lot from elders in my youth about the Habbanis*, about their wars, how they would fight ‘according to names’. What does it mean ‘according to names’? –the letters: *They would make the shape of the [Hebrew] letters with their hands, and by this they would be victorious*. Also the Shar`abim—from the city of Shar`ab—were strong, but not to the same degree as the Habbanis...”

”הדודה שלי, אחות של אבא שלי, סיפרה לי סיפור ידוע בתימן. (הייתי כמו בן מאומץ אצלה... כל לילה היא הייתה מספרת לי סיפור עד שאני נרדם.) פעם בתימן היה שבט פראי של לוחמים ערבים רצחניים שכבשו עיר אחרי עיר, שוחטים את כל מי שמצאו. ככה הם התקדמו ממושב למושב: הורגים, הורסים--גימח שמם--עד שהם התקרבו לעיר של יהודים, בת 13,000 יהודים בערך. כולם היו חסר אונים—אפילו הערבים שביניהם הרימו את ידיהם, וחיפשו לאן להימלט. פתאום הגיעו עשרה [יהודים] חבאנים ונלחמו איתם—עשרה נגד אלף—וחיסלו את כולם. לא היה נשאר בחיים בלוחמים האלה אפילו אחד, ולא נפל אחד מן העשרה... כן, הוא סיפור ידוע בין יהודי תימן...”

My aunt, the sister of my father, told me [what was] a well-known story in Yemen. (I was like an adopted son with her... Every night she would tell me a story until I fall asleep.) Once in Yemen there was a wild tribe of murderous Arab warriors that conquered town after town, slaughtering whomever they found. Thus they moved forward from settlement to settlement: killing, destroying—*may their names be blotted out*—until they approached a city of Jews, 13,000 Jews roughly. Everyone felt hopeless—even the Arabs among them put up their hands, searching for a place to escape. ***Suddenly ten [Jewish] Habbanis arrived and waged war with them—ten against a thousand—and vanquished all of them. Not even one of those warriors was left alive, and not one the ten fell...*** Yes, it is a well-known story among the Jews of Yemen...

”לא ידענו הרבה עליהם. הם היו מביאים מלח מן החוף בעדן ומביאים אותנו רחוק רחוק עד קצה השני של המדבר... הם היו חוצים את המדבר בלי בעיה. הם לא פחדו לא מאויבים, לא מכל מיני בעלי חיים ארסיים, שום דבר, כי הם גדלו ככה... **אתה זוכר את האיש הזה שראיתי בבית מדרש שלך כשהזמנת אותי?**—אני חושב שזה היה אולי לפני שנה בערך... [הוא מזכיר לי את פגישתנו המהירה עם האלוף אביר יהושע סופר ב'בית מדרש אוהל משה' ברמת בית שמש. שניהם הזמנו לדבר לפני ציבור קטן, אחד אחרי השני—ראה בתמונת למטה. אחרי שהרב דיבר והוצרך לצאת, האלוף אביר נכנס: הם רק ראו אחד את השני לא יותר מדקה אחת, מבלי להכיר אחד את השני מקודם] **הוא נראה כמו חבאני—הפנים שלו...**”

We didn't know much about them. They would bring salt from the coast of `Aden and bring it far, far to the other end of the desert... They would cross the desert with no problem. **They had no fear of enemies, not of all kinds of poisonous creatures, nothing, because they grew up like that...** Do you remember that man I saw in your Beith Midrash when you invited me? –I think it was perhaps a year ago roughly... [The mori reminds me here of his brief meeting with the Aluf Abir Yehoshua Sofer in Beith Midrash Ohel Moshe in Ramat Beith Shemesh. Both were invited to speak before a small gathering, one after another—see the pictures below. After that rabbi spoke and needed to leave, the Aluf Abir entered: They only saw each other for not more than a minute, without knowing one another from beforehand.] **He looks like a Habbani—his face...**”

(הצעות מראיון אישי עם הרב יוסף מגורי-כהן שליט"א, תלמיד חכמים וסופר מומחה תימני בלעדי יליד תימן בן 60 שנה, ע"י מיכאל ש. בר-רון ב-ה' אלול תשס"ז (8 לאוגוסט 2007) בגני בושטן האלה, ליד ירושלים)

(Direct quotes from a personal interview with Rav Yoseph Maghori Kohen shlit"א, 60-year old, Yemenite-born (Baladi) Torah scholar and scribe, born in Yemen, by Michael S. Bar-Ron on 5 Elul 5767 (August 8, 2007) at Ganei Bustan Ha'elah, near Jerusalem)



הרב יוסף מגורי-כהן בבית מדרש אוהל משה בכינוס סיום ספר שופטים בתמוז תשס"ו (יוני 2006)

Rav Yoseph Maghori-Kohen at *Beith Midrash Ohel Moshe* at a 'completion gathering' for the Book of Judges in Tammuz 5766 (June 2006)



אביר יהושע סופר נושא דברים אחרים סיום דברי הרב מגורי-כהן (ראה למעלה) באותו כינוס סיום

Abir Yehoshua Sofer speaks after the end of Rav Maghori-Kohen's words (see above) at the same 'completion gathering' in Tammuz 5766 (June 2006)

## 8. The Emphasis on Different Kings of War Technology in the Mishnah:

שלושה תריסין הן: תריס הכפוף, טמא מדרס; ושמשחקין בו בקונפון [נ"א 'קומפון'],  
טמא טמא מת; ודיצת הערביים, טהורה מכלום. (מסכת כלים פרק כד: א)

There are three [kinds of] shields: The bent shield is susceptible to *midras* impurity. And that which they play with in the field is susceptible to corpse impurity. And the toy shield of the Arabs is clean of all ritual impurity. (*Mishnah, Tractate Kelim 24:1*)<sup>1</sup>

Commentary on the Mishnah by Hakham `Ovadia of Bartenura: \*

שלושה תריסין הן: ג' דינים חלוקין זה מזה בתריסין, דהיינו מגינים.  
תריס הכפוף: המצויין אצלנו שמקיפים את האדם משלש רוחות....  
שמסחקים בו בקומפון: בשדה של עמק המלך באים שנים, כל אחד חרבו בידו, ותריס  
קטן שאינו כפוף בידו השמאלית. ולמדין להגן כל אחד במגיניו שלא יכהו חבירו.  
וקורין לו 'אסגרימ"ר'י בלע"ז.

“There are three kinds of ‘trissin’ [shields]: Three different laws from one another in regards to ‘trissin’, which are hand-held shields.

“The bent shield: the one found among us, which surround [protect] a man from three sides.



depiction of Judean warrior (right)  
holding “the bent shield” (תריס הכפוף)  
on ancient Assyrian bas relief

(source of photo could not be traced for citation. If you know the source of this photograph,  
please contact us at [torathmoshe@gmail.com](mailto:torathmoshe@gmail.com))

**“And that which they play with in the field:** In the field of the Valley of the King \*, two [men] come forward, each one with his sword in his [right] hand, and a small, unbent shield in his left hand. And each one learns to defend [himself] with his shield so that his fellow will not strike him. They call this ‘*Esgrimar*’ \*\* in the language of the gentiles.”

*(Classical commentary to the Mishnah by HaRav `Ovadia of Bartenura [c.1440-1516 3]), Head of the Jewish community of Jerusalem)*

---

\* *Valley of the King* (עמק המלך) – The eastern Jerusalem valley between the Temple Mount and Mount of Olives, where the tomb of Absalom remains to this day (Samuel II 18:18, Genesis 14:17). Being the head of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, ***the sage appears to be describing the traditional combat training that Jews being practiced locally at his time (late 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E.),*** in order to identify the specific shield being mentioned in the Mishnah. This provides context for the oral history of the Sofer [*Ma`atuf-DoH / Banei Abir*] family of the ancient martial traditions being maintained by Jews living in the Land of Israel and the Arabian Peninsula until recent times.

\*\* ‘*Esgrimar*’ – Very close to the name of a living Phillipine martial art (a.k.a. “Kali” [*meaning “weapon” in Hebrew*]). It is likely to have been brought there with the Spanish, whose own martial tradition derived heavily from the Hebrew exiles (see *Obadiah 1:20*) who had settled in the “Iberian” (derived from ‘*Ivri*, meaning “Hebrew”) peninsula since the destruction the First Kingdom.



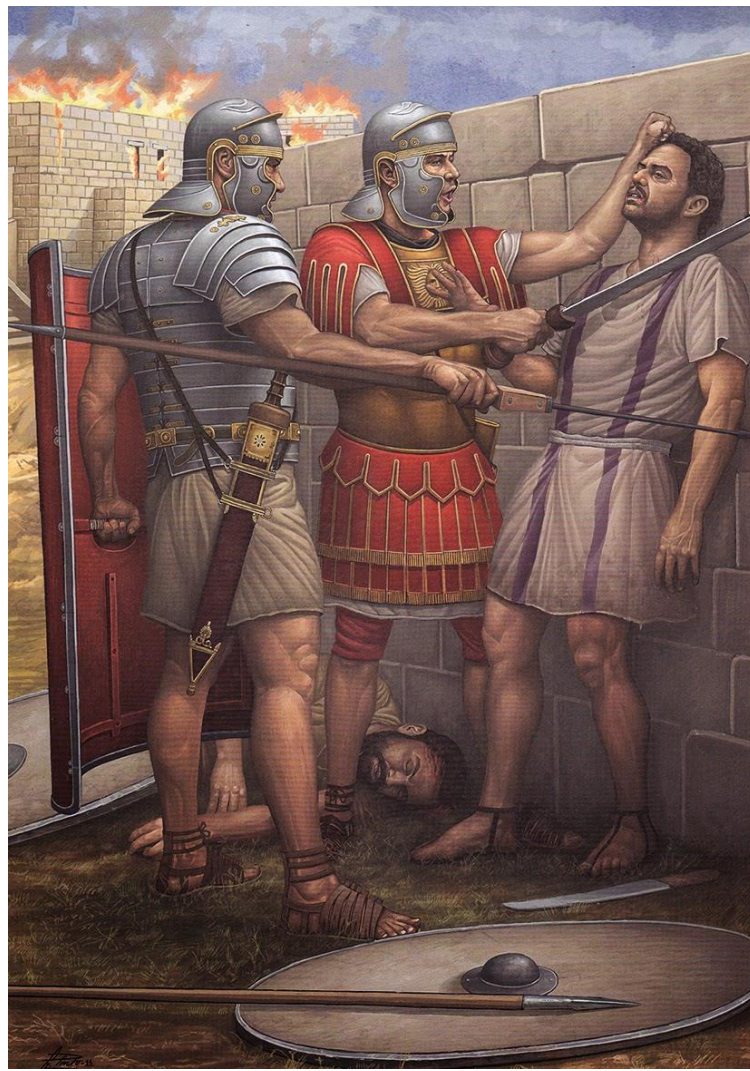


## 9. Practical Martial Art Instruction in the Talmud

ת"ר ישראל שנזדמן לו עובד כוכבים [גוי] בדרך טופלו לימינו  
ר' ישמעאל בנו של ר' יוחנן בן ברוקה אומר בסייף טופלו לימינו במקל  
טופלו לשמאלו. (תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף כה :)

The Rabbis taught: When a non-Jew happens upon an Israelite on the road, he is to handle him [by maneuvering] to his right side. Rav Yishma`el, son of Rav YoHanan ben Beroqah says, “[when he comes at you] with a sword, you handle him [by maneuvering] to his right side; [when he comes at you] with a club, you handle him [by maneuvering] to his left side.

*(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 25b)*<sup>1</sup>



Artwork by © Angel Garcia Pinto.

## 10. The Unique Hebrew Strikes Described in *Midrash*:

ויקם מנשה בן יוסף ויגש אל שמעון, ויכה מנשה את שמעון באגרופו מכה רבה בערפו, וינח שמעון מחמתו. ויאחז מנשה בשמעון ויחזק בו ויאסור אותו וידחהו אל בית הכלא, ויתמהו כל בני יעקב ממעשה הנער. ויאמר שמעון אל אחיו:

**”איש מכם אל יאמר כי מכת מצרי הוא, אין זאת כי אם מכת בית אבי.”**  
(ספר הישר לקדמונים, פרשת מקץ)

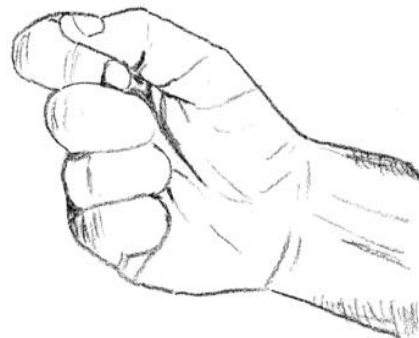
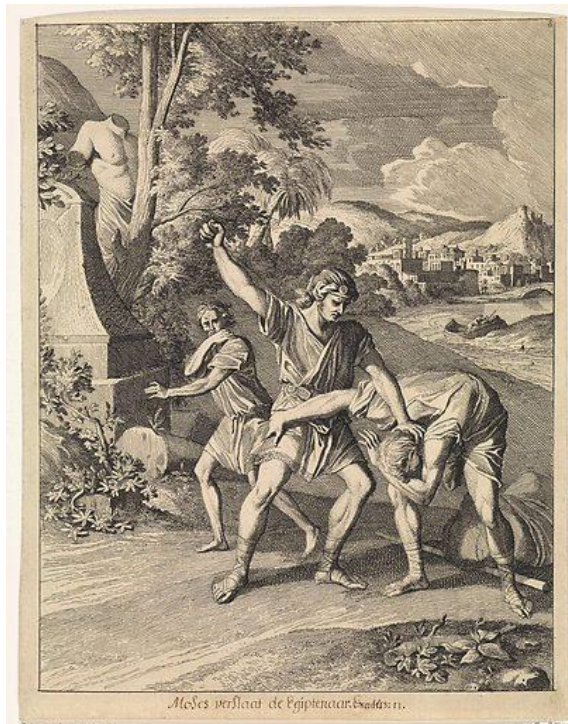
And Manasseh son of Joseph rose up and approached Simeon, and Manasseh struck Simeon with his hand blow, a massive strike to the back of his neck – and Simeon abandoned his fury. Then Manasseh grasped Simeon, seized him, arrested him, and removed him to the prison, and all the sons of Jacob were astonished by the act of the lad. And Simeon said to his brothers:

**“Let none of you say that that was a strike by an Egyptian; that was none other than a strike [learned] from the house of my father.”**

(The Book of Yashar, parashath Miqes) <sup>5</sup>

**”וירא כי אין איש”** [שמות 2: 12] – ...ורבנן אמרי: ראה שאין תוחלת עתיד לצאת ממנו, ולא מבניו ולא מבני בניו עד סוף כל הדורות, ועמד עליו והרגו. **במה הרגו? ר' יצחק אמר: באגרופ הרגו**, כמה דאת אמר: “ולחכות באגרופ רשע” [ישעיהו נח: ד]. (ילקוט שמעוני, שמות)

**And he [Moses] saw that there was no man [he smote the Egyptian]”** [Exodus 2:12] – ...and the Rabbis say: He saw that there was no hope of good coming out of him in the future, and neither from his children or any of his descendents ever, and [then] he stood by him and killed him. **With what did he kill him? Rav YiS’Haq said: ‘he killed him with a hand-strike’,** as it is said, ‘and to smite with the fist of wickedness’ [Isaiah 58:4]. (Yalqut Shim`oni, Shemoth) <sup>6</sup>





## 11. The Warrior, His Dream and His Dance

הלוחם חולם חלום  
כי אם אין לו חלום, על מה יילחם?  
איך הוא לוחם? – הוא לוחם במחול  
ואם הוא בא בשם ה' הוא מחול

The Warrior (*ha-loHem*) dreams (*Holem*) a dream (*Halom*).  
For if he has no dream (*Halom*), for what will he fight (*yeelaHem*)?  
How does he fight (*loHem*)? –He fights (*loHem*) with a dance (*maHol*).  
And if he [truly] comes in the Name of *HaShem*, he is forgiven (*maHul*).

*(A traditional rhyme of the Habbani 'Banei Abir' clan,  
taught by the Aluf Abir, Mori Yehoshua Sofer [Ma`atuf-DoH] al Habbani)*

## 12. Hebrew Strength, Hebrew Faith

"האמונה של הגוים היא בכח, והכח של היהודים הוא באמונה"  
(אלוף אביר מארי יהושע סופר [מעטוף-דוח] אל-חבאני)

"The faith of the [non-Noahide] gentiles is in power, and the power  
of the Jews is in our faith. "

*(The Aluf Abir, Mori Yehoshua Sofer [Ma`atuf-DoH] al Habbani)*



Several of these traditional Torah sources were provided to me by the *Aluf Abir*, Mori Yehoshua Sofer [*Ma`atuf-DoH*] al Habbani. English translation was painstakingly done with the guidance of the *Aluf Abir*, according to the living oral and practical warrior tradition, preserved by the Sofer [*Ma`atuf-DoH / Banei Abir*] clan for generations. The literary sources that appear here are but a sample of what exists.

Although anyone can gain from these insights, especially Torah scholars, they can naturally be much more fully understood and appreciated by students of the Abir/Qesheth® warrior arts, which I no longer represent.

Our private *Beit Midrash* in Ramath Beith Shemesh houses an archive of photographs and testimonies, attesting to the Abir/Qesheth® heritage of the Habbani Yemenite Jewish community, including the Sofer [*Ma`atuf-DoH*] family in particular. It is currently not available to be posted, distributed, or viewed publicly, except for those who visit in person.

“Whoever wishes to lie must [first] distance the witnesses” (*Talmudic dictum*)

<sup>1</sup> Quotes from Mishneh Torah, Mishnah and Talmud are manually copied from the authentic editions posted on [www.mechon-mamre.org](http://www.mechon-mamre.org), without use of their unique punctuation (providing a commentary) or hyperlinks. The English translations are original.

<sup>2</sup> Quotes from Bible are according to the authentic Yemenite manuscript edition posted on [www.mechon-mamre.org](http://www.mechon-mamre.org). The English translations are original, with influence and occasional borrowings from the JPS Bible based on the electronic text (c) by Larry Nelson, and the The Living Torah: The Five Books of Moses by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Maznaim Publishing Corporation, New York, 647 pp.

<sup>3</sup> Biographical information is from the bibliography of The Artscroll Series© / The Stone Edition: The Chumash by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Mesorah Publications Ltd., Brooklyn, NY, 1995, 1313 pp.

<sup>5</sup> Sefer HaYashar: Sefer Divrei HaYamim Haqadmonim, Mishor Holy Book Publishing, B'nei B'raq, 1990, 320 pp.

<sup>6</sup> From the great compendium of ancient Midrash, Yalqut` Shim`oni, Midrash `al Torah: N`vi`im u-Kh`thuvim attributed to Shim`on haDarshan of Frankfurt (13<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), Published by Yaridh ha-S`farim, Jerusalem 5766 / 2006.)