

# Not So Fast!

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

In Tolstoy's *War And Peace*, General Kutuzov exasperates his comrades by refusing to take action against Napoleon. "Maneuver" they urge him, "outflank, attack!" But except for ordering an occasional retreat, Kutuzov insists on doing as close to nothing as he can, and wins the war as Napoleon overextends his supply lines and is ambushed by the Russian winter. Kutuzov's philosophy was the less you do, the less you err.

In the early part of the twentieth century a school of thought developed in chess, led by modernists Reti and Nimzovich, taught players to entice opponents to overextend pawns and pieces, making them vulnerable to attack. Once again the theory seemed to be that vigor and action are not always the best solution to a problem.

The internet grants us the blessings of instantaneousness — and the curse of instantaneousness. Our first reactions are not always our best, wisest or most measured. I have seen sharp, unpleasant fights arise from issues that, had the individuals written a letter or met in person, would never have developed. But few among us, faced with a crisis, have the wisdom of Kutuzov. "Better is the patient spirit than the lofty spirit." teaches Ecclesiastes. Sit. Wait. Count to ten before you hit "send." The chance to respond will still be there, but the wisdom of waiting, once gone, is gone forever.