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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Ki Seitzei  Rabbi Ephraim Hochberg

All for One and One for All

Parshas Ki Seitzei begins with an interesting posuk:

“When you will go out to war against your enemies (plural tense), and Hashem your G-d will give him (singular tense) into your hand, and you will capture its captivity.”

The first phrase of this posuk seems to refer to a war against many different enemies of Bnei Yisrael. However, the posuk’s description of victory (“G-d will give him”) appears to involve defeating just one enemy. What happened to the other enemies of Bnei Yisrael? Why does the posuk shift from plural tense to singular tense? The conclusion of the posuk (“and you will capture its captivity”) is puzzling as well. Why are we recapturing the captives of the enemy?

To answer these questions, we must first examine the nature of this enemy. Chazal teach us that this posuk can be interpreted as a depiction of an individual’s personal battle against his yetzer hara – his evil inclination. The Mesilas Yesharim teaches that a person’s entire life is actually a great battle; all aspects of his existence provide tests which he will hopefully overcome.

In light of this knowledge, we can appreciate Rav Gifter zt”l’s explanation of the posuk’s grammatical inconsistency (plural tense, then singular). Although the yetzer hara may appear to a person in many forms, attacking him on many fronts (“enemies” – plural tense), he must remember that in reality there is only one enemy, the yetzer hara.

When a firefighter battles a blaze, he must focus on the base of the fire. The many tongues of flame all emanate from this single source. Extinguishing the base of the fire serves to extinguish the entire fire. Similarly, if we are successful in subduing our yetzer hara (the “base”), we will discover that many of our enemies have been vanquished.

This interpretation of the first portion of the pasuk clarifies the meaning of the latter part (“you will capture its captivity”). When a person loses a battle to the yetzer hara, part of him – his desires, intellect, and action – has been captured by the yetzer hara, and used in the performance of the aveira. When Hashem helps the person subdue his yetzer hara, these elements are recaptured. Regaining his abilities enables him to progress again in his service of Hashem.

As we approach Rosh Hashana, may we all overcome the yetzer hara in all his guises!

Rabbi Hochberg, an alumnus of the kollel, is a rebbi at Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi and learns daily at the kollel.

Mark your calendars!
The Kollel’s Annual Teshuvah Drasha
with Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Wednesday, September 16th - 8:15 PM
Congregation Sha’arei Tzedek Mishkan Yair

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

SHANA RISHONA

Rabbi Hensch Plotnik

When a man marries a new wife, he shall not go out to the army, nor shall it obligate him in any matter [for a *Milchemes Mitzvah* – a war for the purpose of expanding the borders of Eretz Yisrael]; he shall be free for his home one year, and shall gladden his wife whom he has married. (*Ki Seitzei* 24:5)

There is a dispute among the Rishonim regarding the mitzvah of “gladdening his wife:” Is it related to the first part of the *posuk* which discusses the husband’s military exemption and therefore not relevant for us because we do not have a king who can declare war, or is the mitzvah of “gladdening his wife” an independent clause and applicable today?

The *Smak* (per the *Chasam Sofer* (Even HaEzer 2:155)) holds that the two mitzvos are intertwined and we therefore have no mitzvah of “gladdening his wife.” The *Chinuch* (Mitzvah 582), however, maintains that “gladdening his wife” spans all places and periods and we therefore have this mitzvah today as well.

What are the parameters of this mitzvah? Acknowledging opposing views, the *Chinuch* states that the husband may not leave his new wife for many days even if his wife is *mochel*. (The *Chochmas Adam* and *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* maintain that *mechilah* does work.) It is unclear what “many days” are. However, it is quoted in the name of the *Sefer Eretz Chemdah* that seven days is the upper limit. (*Shu’t B’Tzel HaChochmah* 4:72).

The *Chinuch* also extends this restriction to leaving his wife for (personal) business matters. Although the *Minchas Chinuch* could not find a basis for the *Chinuch’s* position, other *Acharonim* posit that the *Rambam* in his *Sefer HaMitzvos* (*Lo Sa’aseh* 311) and the *Zohar HaKadosh* are consistent with the *Chinuch’s* opinion.

(It is interesting to note that the *Netziv* interprets this *posuk* as merely granting permission to rejoice with one’s new wife despite Klal Yisrael’s involvement in a war. In fact, the *Netziv* posits that the new husband may even volunteer to fight.)

However, the *Chasam Sofer* (Even HaEzer 2:155), citing the *Ramban* and the *Mizrachi*, maintains that this interdiction only prohibits the husband from participating in military and security matters. Leaving for livelihood pursuits as well as for Torah study are not included in this restriction, particularly because they are considered *divrei mitzvah*. (The *Chasam Sofer* proves from a *Gemara* that it is permitted to travel for Torah study; other *divrei mitzvah* would need to be clarified.) It would thus seem that a *Chasid* should be permitted to travel to his *Rebbe* during *shana rishona*, as it is arguably a *d’var mitzvah* as well. However, the *Sefer HaNesuin KeHilchasa* (Chapter 15, note 257) records that *Rav Mendel* of *Riminov* forbade *Chassidim* to stay by him during *shana rishona*.

The *S’dei Chemed* (*Choson V’Kallah* 29) states that a husband that violated this restriction must make up for the time that he was gone at the conclusion of *shana rishona*.

In conclusion, the *Chinuch* explains at great length the significance of this mitzvah of “gladdening his wife.” This is achieved not by partying or providing her with modern definitions of happiness, rather by giving the new wife the attention, affection and appreciation she deserves. (*Aruch Hashulchan* Even HaEzer 64:4). The spirit of this *mitzvah* should carry the couple beyond their first year into a lifelong commitment of *ahava*, *achva*, *shalom* and *reyus*.

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