

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת כי תצא

וראית בשביה אשת יפת תאר וחשקת בה ולקחת לך לאשה
“And you will see among its captivity a woman who is beautiful of form, and you will desire her, you may take her to yourself for a wife” (21:11)

The Torah creates a possibility for a man to marry a non-Jewish captive of war if she goes through a certain process. Why does the Torah provide a permissible way to marry an idolater? Rashi explains that the Torah addresses the evil inclination. The Torah provides a way for one to marry the woman in a permissible manner so that he will not commit any sins and take her anyway.

R' Yechezkel Abramsky points out an important lesson from this Rashi. Hashem never asks us to do more than what we are capable of doing. No mission assigned to us by Hashem is impossible. Rather than ask a person to ignore the beautiful captive, which might be difficult to do, the Torah provides an avenue to do so in a permitted fashion, although this is obviously still not preferred. The Torah addresses the possibility that a person's Yetzer Hara will get a hold of him. This shows us that if someone cannot do something, then the Torah would not ask it of him. Consequently, we can also understand that the Torah is meant for all generations and its commandments will not become too hard to fulfill at any point in time. Its mitzvos and ideals are applicable in any era and at any time.

R' Dovid Feinstein points out that the term "אשת יפת תאר" literally means "a wife of beauty." This is a hint to the fact that this marriage is based only on the woman's outer appearances. This type of marriage is doomed to failure. Beauty is only skin deep and will eventually fade away. One must make sure that he marries based on his potential wife's character and not only because of her physical beauty. As the posuk in Eishes Chayil says: "Charm is false and beauty is worthless, a woman who fears Hashem, she will be praised."

This section regarding marrying a captive is followed by the laws regarding the distribution of inheritance between sons of a beloved wife and a despised wife. This is followed by the section regarding the rebellious son. What is the connection between these three laws? The Avnei Azel explains the progression of the sections. The problem with the soldier who was tempted by the captive was that he only looked at the outside of this woman and ignored her internal character, the fact that she was an idolater. A marriage based on beauty alone with no regard for internal character will end badly. He will eventually hate this wife and it will lead to disputes among the children of his wives. Any child resulting from this union will also not succeed in his training for a Torah life because of the negative influences surrounding his birth. In educating children, one must focus on the inside of the child and his means of

education and not the outside alone. One should know his child and understand his capabilities and select an appropriate educational regimen and school. This choice should not be based on the child's peers or on the external attractiveness of the school. If one ignores the inside and focuses on the outside, the child will not be able to succeed.

**כי תהיין לאיש שתי נשים האחת אהובה והאחת שנואה וילדו לו בנים
האהובה והשנואה והיה הבן הבכר לשניאה**

“When two women will be to one man - the one beloved and the one despised - and they bear him sons, the beloved one and the despised one, and the firstborn son will be born to the despised one” (21:15)

The firstborn child, regardless of who his mother is, receives a double portion in the father's inheritance. The Vilna Gaon points out that this special perk of the firstborn is signified in the word בכר. Each letter has a numerical value twice that of the letter preceding it. Thus, the firstborn's special right is hinted to in its name.

**כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו ויסרו אתו
ולא ישמע אליהם**

“If there will be unto a man a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and they discipline him, but he does not hearken to them” (21:18)

There is only a small window of time during which a child can be convicted as a rebellious son, between the ages of 13 and 13 and a half. The Shem MiShmuel explains that this is because the first few months of his adulthood are the key to the rest of his life. We find that Yaakov and Esav branched out on different paths shortly after they became adults. Even at this young age, the young man begins to choose his path in life. This also explains the connection between these laws and the previous section regarding the firstborn son. The beginning sets the tone for everything that follows and special emphasis must be placed on it. Therefore, we have to create an environment for the youth where they feel that they are truly adults. A bar mitzvah boy should not feel that he is nobody. When he feels the importance of his adulthood, he will act accordingly. Of course, the young man will continue to grow as he gets older, but his intentions and his direction are often set during those first few months.

**כי יקרא קן צפור לפניך בדרך בכל עץ או על הארץ ביצים או אפרוחים והאם
רבצת על האפרוחים או על הביצים לא תקח האם על הבנים**

“If a bird's nest happens to be before you on the road, on any tree or on the ground - young birds or eggs - and the mother is roosting on the young birds or the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young” (22:6)

The halacha states that the mitzva of sending away the mother bird can only be done with a bird that one finds by chance, not with a bird that was prepared for the

purpose of the mitzva. However, the word "יקרא" is spelled with an "א," which literally means "to be called out," and not with a "ה," which means "chanced upon." Why is this word spelled differently? R' Dovid Feinstein explains that a person must recognize that when he is presented with an chance to do a mitzva, he is being called out by heaven to take advantage of the opportunity. Whenever we are presented with a chance for a mitzva, we have to understand that this is our assigned task at the current moment and we cannot abandon it. We cannot procrastinate and we cannot assume that somebody else will do it. We must realize that there is a great responsibility inherent in every potential mitzva that comes our way. Each of us has our own distinct purpose in life that we must accomplish. If we do not do it, nobody will.

**והנה הוא שם עלילת דברים לא מצאתי לבתך בתולים ואלה בתולי בתי
ופרשו השמלה לפני זקני העיר**

“Now, behold, he made a wanton accusation, saying: I did not find signs of virginity on your daughter - but these are the signs of virginity of my daughter. And they should spread out the sheet before the elders of the city” (22:17)

The posuk says that the husband makes an accusation against her, but when the father speaks, he says that the husband made an accusation, not singling out any specific person. Why is there a difference between these two pesukim? The Meshech Chochma writes that the husband is focusing on her faults. In his mind, his claim is only against her. However, the father realizes that his accusations will also reflect badly on her parents and her family, not only on her. That is why, if the husband is found to be lying, the father gets paid in addition to the lashes that the husband receives. He must be punished both for his attempt to harm the woman and his attempt to cast aspersions on her family.

This double punishment shows us that a person is punished for every little thing that he does. Even if he only directly hurts one person, he may indirectly hurt more in the process. This may lead to a heavier punishment. Likewise, one is rewarded for every small good deed. Helping a person or making someone feel good may have an indirect effect on others as well, leading to a greater reward. A person should recognize the domino effect that his actions jumpstart and realize that "a mitzvah leads to a mitzvah, an aveira leads to an aveira." One mitzvah and one aveira can become multiple mitzvos or aveiros very quickly.

Similarly, R' Dovid Feinstein said that if a person is an activist and becomes involved in his community and, as a result, is needed by others, he can avoid punishment for his own deeds because his downfall will cause many others, who do not deserve punishment, to come to harm.

Another lesson that we can learn from the Meshech Chochma is that every letter and every word in the Torah has a purpose and can teach us something important. It

takes time and effort to analyze each posuk and uncover what is hidden beneath the surface of the words, but if we put in the effort, we can find the pearls of wisdom concealed in each one.

כי ישבו אחים יחדו ומת אחד מהם ובן אין לו לא תהיה אשת המת החוצה לאיש זר יבמה יבא עליה ולקחה לו לאשה ויבמה
“When brothers will dwell together and one of them dies, and he has no child, the wife of the deceased shall not marry outside, to a strange man; her brother-in-law shall come to her, and shall take her to himself as a wife, and take her in levirate marriage” (25:5)

The numerical value of the word "yavam" equals the numerical value of "ben." This illustrates that the purpose of yibum is so that a child should be born and that the brother can provide continuity for the deceased.

Chodesh Elul

איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים - "A man to his friend, and gifts to the poor"

The first letters of this posuk from Megillas Esther spell the word Elul. Thie Kitzur Shulchan Aruch writes that this acronym signifies the fact that one should give more tzedaka during the month of Elul in order to merit a successful judgment on Rosh Hashana. Rabbi Friedman adds that we should also focus on the first part of the acronym, "a man to his friend." We should work on our behavior toward other people during, whether it be through charity or in other ways. The Rambam writes that it is a mitzvah to do teshuva for one's bad middos, character traits. We must be mindful of our friends' feelings and welfare. We also ask each other for forgiveness in the month of Elul. We should give equal importance to sins that we have committed against our fellow men and not just focus on repenting for our sins against Hashem.

Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur
Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
Written by Michael Gutmann