

Ki Seitzei

This week's parsha opens with "going out to war" as Rashi states, this speaks of an optional war. Rashi's comment is likely to answer the question of what the difference of is "this going out to war" and the same wording from last week's parsha Shoftim (Chapter 20: 1). Rashi there states, in the *davar acher*, that when you go out to battle means if you have carried out correct judgement, you are assured that if you go to battle, you will succeed and Rashi quotes *tehillim*, about what David Hamelech said...

Chassidus explains that going out to battle, isn't necessarily a physical altercation between warring states, rather, it can apply as a battle that we engage in ourselves as we experience life, and its challenges. The battle is existential, and between our holiest parts of ourselves and our *neshama*, engaging with the mundane world around us.

In Shoftim, Hashem tells us that we must lead a righteous, "correct judgement life" so that the engagement with our adversaries (external triggers) will succeed. The Gemara in Shabbos 146b explains that the antidote for immorality is the torah. The Gemara in Eruvin 54a explains that the antidote to feeling badly is Torah, as Torah unlike any other antidote heals all, not just like a drug of a human which may have a positive effect on one part of the body and be detrimental to another part.

The Gemara in Berachos 5a states, that anyone who doesn't engage in Torah study will be afflicted, whereas if you engage in Torah study, all the afflictions rained onto Egypt will not affect you. Similarly, throughout the Talmud there are adages about the importance of learning Torah, which is a method to achieving justice¹.

Therefore, the profound difference in the "going out to battle" from Shoftim versus Ki Setzei is how you go out. If you go out voluntarily and without the correct foundations, you will result in having a less than ideal relationship. Whereas the Shoftim way will result in Hashem protecting you.

The lesson for Elul, but more importantly transcending the year is that learning Torah is the guard through which we can engage in battle (voluntary or otherwise) to succeed. The war that follows justice, as a result from following and learning the ways of the Torah (*Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof*) is success, whereas the result of voluntary war without justice is less than ideal relationships, that impede on your personal success.

May we have the strength to find the time to learn torah so we can succeed at our battles. As the Gemara in Yoma 35b states, we can make excuses why we can't learn, but that is what it is, excuses. (Hillel, Rabbi Elazar ben Chursom and Yoseph are the reason we must not give excuses, such as being too rich or poor, or too beautiful etc.).

¹ The prayer of Raf Safra in Berachos 16b-17a, is about the engaging of learning Torah for its own sake to keep the ministering angels whose wars cause wars on earth at bay.

Beyond just learning Torah, we must do everything in our power to be the generation that welcomes Mashiach, because we know we are responsible for it not coming back.

May this be the last pre Rosh Hashana preparations in Golus, and may we celebrate with Mashiach Tzidkeinu.