

Parshas Ki Setzei

This week's Parsha Ki Setzei teaches us many laws adages, and Hashkafic ideas. The Parsha begins with the inevitable about going to war and seeing a woman on the expedition. The Torah provides a path to soldier to deal with their lustful urges that may happen from being in a heightened state during a war. The torah describes the wayward son born (possibly) to a relationship with a hated wife. Although the rules of a wayward son never were enacted (according to the Talmud- and the rules to be able to punish the wayward son are very complex and intentionally difficult to occur- Sanhedrin71a).

The Torah then talks about concern over another person's property, sending a mother bird away (for which you get lengthened life), building a protective fence around your roof, making sure there is Tzitzis on your 4 cornered garment. In these repetitions, the law against mixing wool and linen is mentioned, as well not to plow a field with an ox and donkey (and for that matter two differing species of animal). Many of these laws may be understood simply (except the reason for not mixing wool and linen), such as the inefficiency of having 2 different sized animals plow a field. Bal Haturim comments and adds, that the difference in the size relates to the mistreatment of the animals. Meaning the reason not to mix 2 species of animal (in addition to the Torah prohibiting this), is because you will cause harm to one of the animals which is smaller. This is connected to the compassion one shows when sending a mother bird away to take her eggs. While one may posit that animal don't have the depth of emotions as humans, nevertheless

the Torah tells us to negate our own reasoning and send the mother away and compassionately take her eggs, and for this you will benefit from long life.

I think this and respecting one's parents are connect through the outcome of long life, in that we may not understand why we need to respect our parents or show compassion to parts of society we don't think require it. Nevertheless, the Torah says, properly following this brings life as the positive counteracting of our rationale brings out goodness beyond what we understand. Rashi comments the mitzva of Shliuach Hkhan (sending the mother bird away) is juxtaposed to building a new house (for which we must be sure to make a fence), in that a mitzva leads to more mitzvos (and you will be rewarded with a house). Building a fence on my property to protect others seems counter intuitive, after all it is my property, someone coming onto my property takes their own risk. The Torah tells us, no, we must build a protective fence. In the way that one builds a house, we must take care not to mix species as our house and place of living may be connected to our parnassa of farming for which we must also show compassion to not mix species of animals especially if they are different sizes and strengths.

Connected to building a house and farming is the next part of the parsha, on forbidden marriages, and relationships, as family purity is additionally paramount to a Jewish home. The remaining laws relate to us working with people around us (such as not to say lashon Hara, or pledges such as millstones, which cannot allow for a person to repay debts, to pay workers on time, not to embarrass someone and individual responsibility).

The parsha concludes with Zechiras Amalek (which we also read on Parshas Zachor). The Haftarah for this week is read from Yeshayahu 54:1-10 which is also partially the Haftora for Parshas Noach, and closely followed by the Haftora for Parshas Re'eh. The connection to the parsha in addition to being the 5th of the 7 haftaros of compassion, is its mention of the unfaithful wife who returns to her husband, like the Jews did with Hashem ultimately to return with the coming of Mashiach. The connection to Parshas Noach could be to let us remember that Hashem promised Noach he won't upturn or destroy the world. So even though this parsha opens with going to war, for which one may never see the light at the end of the tunnel, remember, Noach was promised the world wouldn't be destroyed, and Yeshayahu showed us the visions for the future when Mashiach will come.

The beginning and the end of the Parsha are connected. When we go out to war, the Torah says "Al Oyvecha" on your enemy, which is an interesting choice of words to describe against an enemy. Chassidus explains, that to win a war one must have the upper vantage point. That means to win the physical, or spiritual battles, one must ought to remain on a higher field, and not stoop to the level of their enemy, lest they lose the battle. There's a saying, don't try to argue with someone stupid, or they will bring you down to their level and win you with experience.

Good Shabbos