

Parshas Ki Seitzei

In this week's Parsha- Ki Seitzei, as the Jews are getting closer to entering the promised Land-Israel, Moshe repeats the rules of the land for them. There is also a message about how to live, compassion about how people behave, and the belief that if you don't listen to the Torah, the outcomes may not be ideal. The Parsha opens with the lust a soldier may have in the heat of war to be enraptured by a captured woman. The Torah warns against committing this act, as it will not end in harmony.

The example I can think of is when someone called me about advice in business, and I told them my thoughts and what the potential outcome of their choice may be, tempting as the situation may be. It was regarding hiring someone, and the person who called me explained some red flags. I told them they shouldn't pursue it, as tempting as the alternative could be, because of my experience. A few years later, we were catching up, and he told me that he should have listened, as the exact problem I highlighted (based on the red flags that I knew to be a problem) had occurred and that it was the exceedingly problematic situation, that ultimately turned out fine but was arduous.

The Torah knows we will be tempted, especially by things that seem right in the heat of the moment or that we can convince ourselves make sense—starting with the beginning of the Parsha, lusting after a woman during the war, continuing with forbidden marriages, charging interest, slander, embarrassing someone,

etc. All these are characterological and preventable, as the ability to resist them exemplifies human ability. All actions can be justified in one's mind- but overcoming them is the ability of a human to overcome negative temptations. As the Torah says, it will keep the nation pure and prevent traits such as the ones found with Amon, who, as the Ramban states, are ingrained with an innate selfishness that should be prevented from entering the Jewish nation.

This selfishness is a lesson. Meaning that there are people who manifest this or, worse, selfishness, so stopping from marrying Ammon could be moot. The point, then, is to look at what the Torah and Mepharshim, like Ramban, are saying. That is to look at the actions considered abhorrent enough to keep them out of the nation and reflect on whether we manifest these actions and whether we can prevent them. The Torah and its offshoots in Halacha, Mussar, Chassidus, etc., are the tools of refinement. It is the knowledge imparted for a better understanding of what it means to be a good human and control that which is the opposite. The Torah's Mitzvos in this week's parsha and Moshe's repetition of them serve as a reminder of what humans can accomplish, but most importantly, Jews, and how we can overcome, with work, impulsivity to the opposite.

The current environment is hostile to Jews because there are platforms where people can spew, with relative ease, vitriol against the Jews and bring up old tropes of antisemitism that are repackaged versions of the same old stories. One recurring theme I observe is

that there is an undertone of an innate connection between Jews and this earth that they believe we have and use to control or manipulate the world. Little do they realize that we have the Torah with mandates such as found in the Parsha that, by following them, exemplify the prowess of what humans can accomplish over the animalistic instincts innate in humans. Because of this, we have an observably different composition that is seen as superior and controlling, and for that, we are hated. What fascinates me is that instead of trying to join “the club,” they profess to work to eliminate the “club.”

But rest assured, and as we see in the Parsha this week, we must remember to destroy Amalek, which allegorically (and physically) is a part of us we must remember to destroy. The part that keeps us separate from Hashem and Torah. By remembering to forget something, we maintain a piece of it within us as a reminder of what not to be. In Shemos 17, when we first saw the battle with Amalek, when the Jews were looking at Hashem, they succeeded when heaven forbid, the opposite, the enemies got stronger.

We must look to Hashem and remember that because Hashem is our father and King of all Kings, we turn to him for salvation, and in our case, the ultimate redemption arrives speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos