



Parshas Ki Seitzei

For the week ending 14 Elul 5758
5 - 6 September 1998

Overview

The Torah describes the only permissible way that a woman captured in battle may be married. In a case where a man is married to two wives, one whom he hates, and she bears a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is death by stoning. The body of a hanged man must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had been the dwelling place of a soul which is holy. One who finds lost property has a responsibility to track down the owner and return it. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs; rather the mother must be sent away first. A fence must be built around the roof of a house to prevent people from falling. It is forbidden to plant a field with a mixture of seeds; or to plow using an ox and a donkey together; or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads — *tzitzis* — on its corners. Laws and penalties in regard to illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. If as a result of the battle a slave escapes, he must not be returned to his master. Promiscuity is prohibited to men and women alike. Taking any kind of interest for lending money to a Jew is forbidden. *Bnei Yisrael* are not to make vows even for a good cause. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting, but not take it home with him. Divorce and remarriage are legislated. A new husband is exempted from the army and stays at home the first year to make his wife happy until the relationship is cemented. Collateral on a loan may not include tools of labor, for this may prevent the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara'as* is forbidden. Even if a loan is overdue, the creditor must return the debtor's collateral every day if the debtor needs it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, proselytes and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court has the right to impose the punishment of lashes. An ox must not be muzzled in its threshing, but must be allowed to eat while it works. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate, and used with honesty. The Parsha concludes with the mitzvah to wipe out the name of Amalek, for in spite of knowing all that happened in Egypt, they ambushed the Jewish People after the Exodus.

Insights

COME AND GET IT

“You shall not see the donkey of your brother or his ox falling on the road and hide yourself from them; you shall surely stand them up with him.” (22:4)

The phone rang. A well-manicured hand stretched across a vast, sumptuous walnut and leather desk, selected one of several phones, and answered it.

“Speak.”

“Yes, Uh ... Yes, Uh. Is this Mr. Big?”

“That is what they call me...”

“Mr. Big — My name is Little. I need your help. I've heard you lend money to people. Do you think you could lend me, say, ten thousand dollars?”

Mr. Big listened. No one was more surprised than Mr. Little when, after a few minutes, he secured his loan.

“I can't tell you how much this means to me, Mr. Big.”

“Just be here at my office tomorrow at 9 AM sharp.”

The following day came. 9 o'clock; 10 o'clock; 11 o'clock...

At 2 o'clock that afternoon the phone rang on the big walnut desk.

“Yes, Uh...Yes, Uh. Is this Mr. Big?”

“Little! Where were you this morning?”

“Look, I'm really sorry. Can I still get the loan?”

“Be here tomorrow morning at nine — without fail.”

“Yes, yes. Thank you so much. Tomorrow morning at nine. Without fail.”

The following day at 9 o'clock, Mr. Little was nowhere to be seen. Nor was he any more in evidence at 10, 11 or 12 o'clock. At 3 PM the phone rang. “Mr. Big. This is Little speaking. Is that loan still available?”

“Mr. Little, I just had a major sense of humor failure where you're concerned. Good-bye.”

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A Jew has a mitzvah to help someone load or unload his donkey (or his car) if it "fell by the road." But the mitzvah is specifically *to help*. The Torah says "you shall surely stand them up *with him*." With him. It doesn't mean the owner of the donkey can say "Look chum. This is your mitzvah, okay? So I'll just have a seat over here and order an iced lemonade while you deal with the donkey. After all it's your mitzvah — not mine. Waiter!"

Similarly, when we pray for more spirituality in our lives, we must also make our own efforts to imbibe that spirituality. For example: When we pray every morning "*Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah*," we are asking G-d to help us in our Torah studies. When we finish praying, then, shouldn't we study some Torah? Wouldn't that show we're eager to receive the gift that we have just asked for?

When we pray for more spirituality in our lives, it will be given to us. But we must also make a little effort to receive this biggest of gifts. at the office to get our free loan.

JUST FOR STARTERS

"When you go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver them into your hand..." (21:10)

The Talmud states that a person's *yetzer hara* (*negative inclination*) grows more powerful every day, and were it not for Hashem's help he would succumb. Through natural means alone, we can never overcome our *yetzer hara*, and we would become discouraged and stop even trying to fight. Therefore the Torah tells us "*When you go out to war against your enemies*" — if you will only start to fight, only *go out* to war — you will be victorious, because "*Hashem your G-d will give them into your hand*" — you will receive Divine assistance to win the battle. As the Talmud states: "Someone who tries to purify himself receives help from above."

DONKEY KONG

"Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together." (22:17)

The ox represents the elevated part in each of us, our gazing heavenward, our desire to attain lofty spiritual goals. The donkey, on the other hand, is symbolic of everything physical, materialistic, and earth-bound. If we want to serve Hashem, to plow and labor in the field of spiritual elevation, we cannot hope to succeed if we are still yoked to the donkey within.

Sources:

Come And Get It - The Chafetz Chaim
Just For Starters - Talmud, Tractate Kidushin, Toras Moshe
Donkey Kong - Meor V'Shemesh

Haftorah: Yishayahu 54:1-10

AN ORPHAN PRAYER

"Sing out O barren one, who has not given birth...for the children of the desolate outnumber the children of the inhabited." (54:1)

An old joke: "Rabbi. I prayed and prayed to G-d for some- thing I really wanted, but my prayers weren't answered." "Yes, they were." said the Rabbi, "The answer was no."

Even when we think the answer to our prayers is "no," in reality, no prayer ever goes unanswered. Every prayer makes an impact in the higher spiritual realms. When a prayer seems to have fallen by the way, we look at it as worthless, and yet it makes an awesome impact on the very fabric of reality. Far beyond our comprehension in the loftier spheres, that little prayer is moving worlds.

This is the meaning that lies behind the verse "Sing out O barren one, who has not given birth...for the children of the desolate outnumber the children of the inhabited." The children of the desolate, those "orphan" prayers are changing the universe beyond the limited view of our physical eyes.

Degel Machane Ephraim

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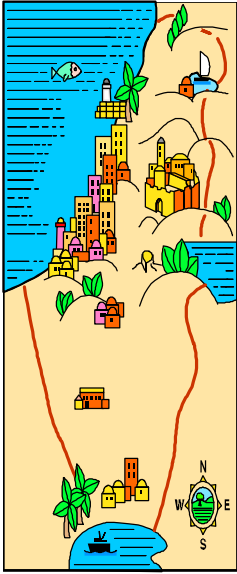
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LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

“He (Yaakov) dreamed and behold there was a ladder standing on the earth with its top reaching heaven, and behold, angels of G-d were going up and down on it.” (Bereishis 28:12)



Heaven is the abode of angels, so it would seem more logical for the angels in Yaakov's prophetic dream to first descend and then ascend. This led our Sages to conclude that there were two sets of angels — those who had hitherto escorted Yaakov while he was in *Eretz Yisrael*, and those who were to become his escorts when he left the land on his way to the home of his uncle, Lavan.

The *Eretz Yisrael* angels don't leave the Holy Land, so they went up the ladder back to Heaven, while the angels in charge of escorting outside of *Eretz Yisrael* came down to take over this responsibility.

The need for different angels may be understood in the light of our Sages' statement (quoted by Rashi in *Bereishis* 18:2), that an angel is never charged with two different missions. Angelic protection in *Eretz Yisrael* is so distinct from that provided outside the land that it might have constituted assigning two different missions to the same angel.

Bereishis Rabbah 68:12