

MITZVAH OR AVEIRAH? PART II

Oftentimes, we fail to realize that although something may seem good, it is indeed

detrimental. The reverse is true as well. It takes lots of scrutiny to really look deep down and find something's true essence. This applies to people as well. The famous saying goes: "Don't judge a book by its cover." Looking at things on a superficial level only distorts the true image in front of you. The פרשה of תצא כי תצא continues the theme of war discussed at the end of שופטים, with only ערופה separating the two topics. The תורה goes into the הלכות that apply when a soldier is fighting, and his eyes gaze upon an enemy woman. Being that he wants to take this woman as a wife, the תורה gives him a היתר, but under certain conditions. For example, she grows out her hair and nails, and cries over her separation from her family for a month. If he still desires her, he may marry her. If not, he must let her go free; he can't even sell her. This is better known as the מצוה of אשת יפת תואר. Just as we saw last week, this מצוה seems strange. Why does the תורה allow us to marry non-Jewish women? What is the nature of this מצוה? Is it even a מצוה?

Unlike the מצוה of appointing a king, here we see something unique, in that אשת יפת תואר comes to permit that which is usually prohibited. י"ד¹ indicates that the תורה did this only for the הרע. Hashem knows it's inevitable that in times of war, man's hormones will be all out of whack, and the situation at hand will cause him to act purely out of instinct, as opposed to thinking about things first. Therefore, the תורה gave him a היתר to follow his animalistic desires and marry this woman, under certain parameters.

י"ד doesn't finish there, rather he brings down the מדרש² which states that marrying a יפת תואר will eventually lead to a בן סורר ומורה being born from this relationship, which he derives from the מאמר י"ח³ that even if you decide to go through with the marriage, you will eventually come to hate her. Hence, the juxtaposition of the 3 פרשיות in the Torah (בסו"מ) לשון (אש"ת, הבן הבכור לשניאה, בסו"מ). The לשון of the אבשלום מעשה shows this when it says "עבירה גוררת עבירה". This is evident from the מעשה with אבשלום. In the midst of war, דוד המלך took מעכה as an אשת יפת תואר, and their son was אבשלום. After the death of אמנון, the oldest son to דוד, it looked as if אבשלום, the next oldest son, would be next in line as the heir to דוד's throne. Pre-empting his rule, אבשלום rebelled against his father, leading to his ultimate downfall. It is interesting to note that after the initial strike to אבשלום, he survived. דוד's army then surrounded him, and kept jabbing at him until he died. This reminds me of the פסוק⁵ where we see the commandment of "ו" - "and all the people of his city should pelt him with stones until he dies" - discussed by the בסו"מ. However, it seems difficult to suggest that אבשלום was a בן סורר ומורה, as the גמרא⁶ states that three things have never happened and will never happen, one of which is the בסו"מ. Be that as it may, the גמרא just a few lines later brings a מעשה where רבי יוחנן was sitting on the grave of a בסו"מ, which is explained to be אבשלום!⁷

The אור החיים⁸ points out a very interesting hidden message within the מצוה of אש"ת. When

1 רש"י דברים כא.יא ד"ה "ולקחת לך לאשה"

2 מדרש תנחומא כי תצא א

3 ספרי דברים פסיקתא ריד

4 שמואל ב יז-יח

5 דברים כא.כא

6 סנהדרין עא.

7 עין טור יורה דעה שסד לענין ישיבה על הקברות

8 אור החיים דברים כא.יא

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אדם הראשון ate from the tree, and changed mankind forever, the evil forces in the world, captured a bunch of נשמות, and inserted them into non-Jews, who would later convert. Some of the more famous ones were ושמעיה ואבטליון, רות, and אונקלוס. When the pure soul can't overpower the impure soul of the body it's occupying, it's stuck there until it's freed. We see this by שכם, who raped דינה. The נשמה of שכם was really that of ר' חנינא בן תרדיון, desiring to get out of the impure body and link to a pure, Jewish soul. The תורה allows the union between man and the נשי"ת so the pure נשמה within the woman can be freed. That's why the היתר applies even to a woman who isn't as attractive. Making her grow out her hair and nails, stripping her of her beautiful clothes, and having her cry in your house, is all intended to remove the physical mask, and let the man see the woman for the pure soul she really is.