



Parsha Perspectives RABBI BINYOMIN ADLER

כי תצא למלחמה על איביך ונתנו ה'... בידך ושבית שבי
וראית בשביה אשת יפת תאר וחשקת בה ולקחת... לאשה

"When you will go out to war against your enemies, and the L-rd your G-d will deliver him into your hand, and you will capture his captivity. And you will see among its captivity a woman who is beautiful of form, and you will desire her, and you may take her to yourself for a wife." (Deuteronomy 21:10-11)

The Medrash says that the battle referred to here is a milchemes hayetzer, a battle against the Evil Inclination. Why does the Torah allude to this battle by stating that one goes out?

It would seem the opposite is true—when one is outside his safe environment and is confronted by the temptation to sin, he should escape inside, similar to the statement in the Talmud (*Sukkah* 52b) that when one sees the "repulsive one," i.e. the Evil Inclination, he should drag him into the study hall. What, then, is the meaning of the Medrash that states that one should "go out" to battle his Evil Inclination?

It says in Isaiah (55:12), "*Ki vesmicha seitzei*," you will "go out" with joy. The Gerrer Rebbe interprets this verse homiletically to mean that one can exit his state of depression and worries by being in a joyful state. Let us delve into this deceptively simple statement.

What is the biggest obstacle preventing a person from accomplishing his goals in this world? While some suggest it is lack of discipline and focus, there is a larger component at play. The real barrier between us and our potential accomplishments is a lack of joy.

The story is told of the *chassid* whose neighbor asked him about the necessity

of his travels to the *Rebbe*. "Is it not enough," asked the neighbor, "to pore over the *chassidic* and *mussar* (character and spiritual development) literature in your own home?" The *chassid* responded, "When I sit in my house with a book and begin to study, the Evil Inclination eventually gets up and begins to dance on my table, and then kicks my book open to the chapter that discusses the inherent weakness of man and how one must exert himself to overcome the Evil Inclination. Upon reading this chapter, I become forlorn and overcome with uncertainty about my ability to best the Evil Inclination. When I travel to the *Rebbe*, however, the *Rebbe* knows exactly what I am lacking and what I need to do to repair my faults. He strengthens me and gives me the *tikkun*, the rectification, that my soul needs."

Similarly, in doing battle with our Evil Inclination, we need to "go out" from, or leave behind, the somber approach. While one can certainly spend time philosophizing about what is preventing him from serving G-d properly, he is nevertheless still mired in the mud of

his misdeeds and character faults. When one leaves his state of depression, his joy enables him to truly serve G-d.

We are nearing the High Holy Days, when we will stand before G-d in judgment for the past year's deeds. Although we must approach the upcoming period with awe, there must also be a sense of joy. We are confident that G-d will be kind to us in his judgment and bless us with a good year.

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WORD of the WEEK
by Rabbi Mordechai Becher
מעקה

When you build a new house you shall make a מעקה—*ma'akeh* for the roof" (Deuteronomy 22:5). Onkelos translates *ma'akeh* as a "container" or "bag" which as Rashi understands it is something designed to protect that which is within, in other words a guard-rail, so people do not fall. Ibn Ezra and Rashbam write that they could find no similar words to this in the Torah, although Rashbam relates it to the word עקה—*akeh* which means to "oppress" (Psalms 55:4) or "encumber" (Amos 2:13). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch also relates it to *akeh* which he understands as "enclose" or "press in." Legally it is defined as a barrier or wall at least 10 handbreadths high (*Bava Batra* 61a).

Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

"If you build a new house, you shall make a fence for your roof, so that you will not place blood in your house if a faller falls from it" (Deuteronomy 22:8). In this verse, the Torah commands us put a guard rail on one's roof to prevent an accident.

נ) The would-be victim of the homeowner's personal negligence is referred to here as a "faller." Rashi notes that one who falls is viewed as if he was meant to fall, and the unfortunate result was a match made in heaven between the negligent home owner and the one deserving of a fall. The Torah seems to imply that on some supernal plane, the tragic fall was no accident at all. Doesn't this notion somehow diminish the responsibility of the one who failed to secure his roof?

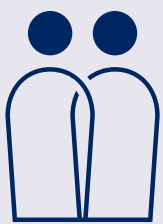
ב) If falling victims somehow deserve their fate, why is the onus placed on the homeowner to prevent something that is "meant" to happen?

A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS *by Rabbi Mordechai Becher*

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was asked if smoking marijuana was permissible. He responded that it is forbidden and gave a number of reasons. First he mentions both the physical and mental health risks of marijuana as sufficient reason to forbid its use. Also, if marijuana use is illegal by state law, then Jewish law requires obedience to that law, and hence it would be prohibited by Jewish law. He also assumes that one's parents would object, and hence the obligation of respect for parents would also forbid its use. He then cites the case of the "rebellious son" from our *parsha*, who is described by the Talmud as being addicted to meat and wine, which will inexorably lead him into a life of crime (*Sanhedrin* 70a). Rabbi Feinstein maintains that the case of the "rebellious son" teaches us a Biblical prohibition against engaging in addictive behavior and consuming addictive substances (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah* 3:35).

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT! *by Rabbi Mordechai Becher*

The Torah prohibits accepting an Ammonite or Moabite (male) as a convert because of their cruelty and negative characteristics (Deuteronomy 23:3). There are similar restrictions on other nations regarding conversion (e.g. Egyptians only after three generations). However, the Talmud points out that none of these genealogical, national restrictions apply since the time of Senacherib, the Assyrian Emperor. He, in the words of the Talmud, "mixed up the entire world" (*Brachos* 28a). His policy was to forcibly exile entire peoples so as to destroy national identity, similar to Stalin, and indeed he succeeded in obliterating the identities of many ancient peoples, who today cannot be identified as the same peoples mentioned in the Torah even if they are living in identifiable lands like Egypt and Moab (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Isurei Biah* 12:25).



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