Points to Ponder

Ki Tze Tze 5778

**והיה אם לא חפצת בה...ומכור לא תמכרנה בכסף If you shall not be interested in her send her away…do not sell her (21:14) – Rav Mordechai Zuckerman ztl.** points out that war did not allow EVERYTHING. The Yetzer Hara, left unchecked, will replace one desire for another – in this case the desire for physical companionship with the desire for money and power. Still, the Torah reminds us that there is a limit to the Heter of war – and of our need to remember that indeed we CAN conquer our Yetzer HaRa. Certain areas are tough under immediate stress but the long term desire for wealth can be brought under control.

 **כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורהWhen a person has a rebellious son (21:18) – Rashi** explains that the Ben Sorer U’Moreh is punished in regard to his future. It seems odd that we judge the son because of the results of HIS actions but allow his father, the one who in the moment could not control himself, he earns a free pass. Why do we not provide the same pass to the son? **Rav Bentzion Bruk ztl.** explained that we see the dangers of the impressionability of youth here. While the soldier (who can only join the army at 20) is given some leeway under the duress of war, the youngster is still under the tuteledge of Chinuch. If at the young age he is not set to understand the proper path without shortcuts, he will ultimately be a danger to society as a whole. The Torah would rather limit that potential danger.

 **איננו שומע בקולינוHe does not listen to us (21:20) – Rav Shach ztl.** explains that the problem of the rebellious son is that he does not listen. One who is too busy to listen cannot grow and can never be a part of Kedoshim Teeheeyu. Such a person cannot rise to the occasion.

 **כי יקח איש אשה ובא עליה ושנאהWhen a man takes a wife and he hates her (22:13) – Rashi** explains that if one starts off hating someone then s/he will come to make up ugly rumors – even about a spouse**. Rav Yitzchak Kupfelman ztl.** pointed out that the Motzee Shem Ra is a symptom and not the problem. The problem begins at the source – that there is marital discord and the couple needs to work on that first.

 **ויהפך ה' אלוקיך לך את הקללה לברכהHashem changed his curse to a blessing (23:6)** – We do not find any actual blessing by Bilaam. We merely find his expression of the traits of Bnei Yisrael. What does the Possuk mean when it suggests that Hashem changed his curses to blessings? **Rav Nosson Zvi Wachtfogel ztl.** suggested that in the same way that a curse can begin merely by pointing out one’s shortcomings (See Rashi to Bamidbar 24:1) which was Bilaam’s intent by highlighting the sins of the Jewish people, the mentioning of our traits of strength become the greatest vessels for a Beracha from Hashem.

 **זכור את אשר עשה ה' אלקיך למריםRemember what Hashem did to Miriam (24:9) – Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** asked how it was possible that Miriam who had done such great things throughout her life was to be remembered for her single failing? Why was that ok? He explained that people often think of a scale on which we are judged, where as long as you are more or less alright, you will do fine. As long as you have more points on the positive side than on the negative, you have nothing to worry about. The Torah is telling us that this is not enough. Even one failure can be critical. One needs to strive to abide by God's word totally and completely, in all one's actions, and not just be on the right path in some general sense. We learn from Miriam the importance of every action, and how important it is to remain focused on our service of God. He added that there is also a more positive correlate. We generally say that the reward for good deeds is greater than the punishment for bad ones. As such, every action taken in the right direction, every fulfillment of a mitzva, merits tremendous recognition from God.

 **וְנִגְּשָׁ֨ה יְבִמְתּ֣וֹ אֵלָיו֘ לְעֵינֵ֣י הַזְּקֵנִים֒ וְחָֽלְצָ֤ה נַֽעֲלוֹ֙ מֵעַ֣ל רַגְל֔וֹ His Yevama shall come forward to him in front of the Zekanim and remove his shoe (25:9)** – The Achronim disagree as to whether one must engage in Chalitza or whether a woman who does not desire to remarry can refuse to undergo Chalitzah. The general assumption is that the difference of opinion is whether Chalitza is a Mitzva or a matir. **Rav Eizel Charif ztl.** suggested that in this case, where the Torah specifies so many required details about the reading of the Possukim etc. as commands, that this must be a Mitzva. **Rav Schachter Shlita** thought that the proof was not absolute. Rather, the Torah was specifying what to do if one WANTED to engage in Chalitza. If one wanted to do so, then these are the rules.

**Haftorah: כָּל־כְּלִ֞י יוּצַ֚ר עָלַ֙יִךְ֙ לֹ֣א יִצְלָ֔ח וְכָל־לָשׁ֛וֹן תָּֽקוּם־אִתָּ֥ךְ לַמִּשְׁפָּ֖ט תַּרְשִׁ֑יעִי Any weapon sharpened against you will not succeed and any tongue that will rise against you in judgment you will condemn (Yeshayahu 54:17) – Rav Pam ztl.** explained that lest one think that greatness in Torah depends on a photographic memory or extraordinary powers of concentration that are gifts from Hashem, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the great Chachamim are great because they treasure every morsel of Torah that they receive. By appreciating a depth to a new insight, one guarantees that its impact will be felt for a long time and will be able to withstand scrutiny from the outside.