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**Afghanistan’s Last Remaining Jew to Leave Over Taliban Fear**



 The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan has made many Afghans fearful of the Taliban’s return to power, prompting the country’s last remaining Jew to make plans to leave as soon as possible.

 “G-d willing, I cannot say seven to eight months, but I will definitely leave by the time the Taliban come,” said Zebulon Simentov, 62, who lives in Kabul.

The Taliban have increased their attacks on government-controlled areas in recent weeks, just as the United States and its NATO allies started withdrawing their remaining forces from the country.

 The U.S. announced Tuesday that it had pulled out between 30% and 44% of its 2,500 troops in the South Asian country. A complete withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO forces is expected to take place by September 11.

 Simentov has been the caretaker of Kabul’s only synagogue for decades and lives in the synagogue complex. He hopes the government can hire a replacement when he moves to Israel, to which his wife and two daughters moved in the 1990s because of the civil war in Afghanistan. He has visited once, for two months in 1998, he said.

*Reprinted from the August 12, 2021 website of Matzav.com*

**Parshas Ki Teitzei:**

**The Greatness of Man**

**Change is Difficult**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



 “If a man shall commit a crime whose judgment is death, he shall be put to death, and you shall hang him on a tree.” — Devarim 21:22

**The Punishment of Stoning**

 Of the four capital punishments in the Torah, the most severe is s’kilah. After being killed, the criminal is hung publicly for all to see so that others will learn not to do as he did.

 Yet the Torah warns us that his body should not remain hanging for too long. He must be buried that day because it is an embarrassment to the King to let him hang.

 Rashi explains: “It is an embarrassment to HASHEM to have a human being hanging because man was formed in the image of HASHEM. Since the Jewish people are called `sons of HASHEM,’ the shame is even greater. Therefore, the body must be taken down that day before sunset.”

**The Case of the Identical Twins**

 Rashi then gives a moshol. This is comparable to identical twins. One brother rises through the ranks and eventually becomes king. The other brother turns to a life of crime. Eventually, the hoodlum is caught and hung. Since he is identical to the king, anyone passing by would proclaim, “Look! The king has been hung!” not realizing that it is actually his twin. Rashi explains that it is for this reason that the Torah commands us not to leave the body hanging too long. A person is made in the image of HASHEM, and it is an embarrassment to HASHEM to leave His likeness hanging.

 This Rashi is very difficult to understand. This moshol implies that one passing a hanging human would on some level mistake him for HASHEM.

 This seems preposterous! No one would mistake man for HASHEM. HASHEM created the heavens and the earth; man can barely make it through his day. HASHEM lives on for eternity; man puts his head down to sleep, not knowing whether he will ever awaken. How can anyone mistake man for the Creator? What is Rashi trying to teach us with this moshol?

 The answer to this question can be found by understanding a different perspective of man.

**Replica vs. Representation**

 If you ride the elevator to the 86th floor of the Empire State building, you will find a gift shop selling models of the very building that you are standing in. Those are **replicas**. A replica reminds a person of the original. Granted it is in miniature, and granted no one would mistake it for the original, but it carries, almost in caricature form, some reminiscence of the original.

 A flag, on the other hand, is not just a piece of cloth that reminds us of a particular country. It stands for and symbolizes the nation itself. It is a **representation** of the county. The American flag is not allowed to touch the ground. It would be considered an affront to the people it represents. So too, a throne is more than a seat the king sits upon. It embodies the distinction and nobility of the king. If one sits on the king’s throne, it is an affront to the king’s honor.

 If the Torah were teaching us that man was a **replica** of HASHEM or even a **representation** of Him, it would be a huge perspective change in the way that we view man. Rashi seems to be saying that man is far more than a replica of HASHEM, and even more than a representation of HASHEM. Man is in a completely different category. To understand this Rashi, we must understand the role that HASHEM gave man in the universe.

**All Physical Manifestations**

**Have a Spiritual Counterpart**

 Chazal explain to us that all physical manifestations have a spiritual counterpart. The spiritual counterpart of Creation is maintained by man. If he accomplishes his mission in the world, he elevates himself and the world along with him. If he doesn’t live up to his role, then both he and the world that depends upon him become damaged. In the case of Adam, one sin caused a radical change in the destiny of the world and mankind. HASHEM placed the “keys of Creation” into man’s hands.

 We don’t see this because we look at the world in its physical form and see a static existence. Physicality is. Matter exists. A solid piece of wood is unmoving and inert. However, if you were to ask a scientist about that seemingly solid piece of wood, he would tell you it is actually comprised of electrons spinning around in constant motion. There is far more to it than meets the eye.

 So too, the spiritual dimension of existence is in constant flux, ever changing. For its continued existence, it requires man’s input. His actions and decisions fuel the spiritual state of existence, and therefore the physical as well.

**Man as a Partner in Creation**

 HASHEM is the Creator and **Maintainer** of the world. The entire cosmos is dependent upon Him. HASHEM put man in the center of Creation and made the world dependent upon him. If we were fully attuned to the Torah’s view of man, we would see him as the **maintainer** of physicality. In that sense, he is almost like a little creator – the world depends upon him for its existence.

 This is what Rashi is adding with his moshol. If one truly understood the basis of the universe, he would see that man is far greater than even a **replica** or **representation** of HASHEM. Man is so great that he could almost be mistaken for a creator.

 The Torah is teaching us to view man in a very different light. We should look at man and gasp, “That is a man! Man is created in the image of HASHEM! How much honor and accord is due to that great person!” Obviously, this concept will greatly affect the way we treat others. But just as significantly, it will impact the way we view our own potential and how much we should come to expect from ourselves.

*Reprinted from the current website of TheShmuz.com*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Ki Teitzei**



 The Torah speaks of making war upon one's enemy. Who is this enemy? The simple explanation is that it is a physical or national enemy that wishes to harm the Jewish people or the commonwealth of Israel. To defend oneself from such an enemy, there are circumstances that dictate a type of preventive war that avoids later defeat or catastrophe. This is certainly the simple and literal interpretation of the verse and subject of the Torah reading this week.

 There is a rabbinic tradition, running through the works of many of the commentators over the centuries, regarding another layer of meaning to this verse. The enemy described is not so much a physical or national enemy as it is a spiritual or societal foe. In the immortal words of the famed comic strip character Pogo “we have met the enemy and they are us.”

 We are all aware that many times in life we are our own worst enemy. We engage in harmful practices and commit acts that we know to be detrimental and self-destructive. Yet, we are driven by our desires, and we often allow ourselves to be trapped into a situation that can only lead to disappointment. The Torah as is its wont to do, vividly describes the struggle that we have with ourselves for self-improvement and personal accomplishment. It describes this struggle as a war, a battle against the ferocious and aggressive enemy who must be combatted.

 This idea, that our struggle in life is to be viewed as an inner battle in the war of life, is meant to impress upon us to develop within ourselves as wholesome personalities. At one and at the same time, we are bidden to deal with eternity and heavenly ideals, and simultaneously, we are occupied with the mundane fact of everyday living.

 Caught in this contradiction of circumstances, we are oftentimes prone to succumb to our daily problems and issues, completely ignoring the larger spiritual picture that is present. It is at such moments of self-absorption that temptation translates itself into reality, and we create situations that ultimately prove to be enormously harmful to our well-being.

 Great generals oftentimes engage in a tactical retreat, to achieve a strategic victory. War is always a long-term situation, filled with temporary reversals and plans that remain unfulfilled or even abandoned. But the overarching reality is that basic strategy requires tenacity, courage, flexibility, and a stubborn refusal to succumb to the societal, political, and worldly pressures that beset all of us. It is interesting that despite all our pleas and prayers for peace, war is a constant in human history. It may take on different forms, cold, economic, or military, but it is ever present within our world. By reminding us of this fact, the Torah prepares us for victory in the struggles of life.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**A Jew’s Obligation to**

**Fight His Two Enemies**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 The first verse of this week's Torah portion, Ki Teitzei, seems to contain a grammatical error. "When you go forth to war against your enemies," it begins, "and the L-rd your G-d will deliver him into your hands." Why does the Torah begin the verse with the plural--enemies-- and continue in the singular?

 Every word in the Torah is exact, every letter conveying a multitude of nuances and meanings which teach countless lessons. This verse, which seemingly deals with the subject of conventional warfare, alludes to a different type of war, a spiritual war which is waged by every individual.

 A Jew may face two types of enemies: one which threatens his physical existence and one which threatens his special holiness as a member of the Jewish people -- his Jewish soul.

 The Torah uses the word "enemies" to refer to both these threats, for the body and soul of the Jew work in tandem, united in their service of G-d. Whatever imperils one's physical well-being threatens one's spiritual equilibrium, and vice versa.

 The Torah tells us how to emerge victorious over both types of enemy: "When you will go forth." A person must gird himself with the strength that comes from absolute faith in G-d, even before encountering the enemy. Next, one's approach must be that of ascendancy -- "against (literally, `over') your enemies." Know that G-d Himself stands beside you and assists you in your struggle.

 Armed in such a manner, victory is assured, not only against conventional enemies, but against the root of all evil -- the Evil Inclination, equated in the Gemara with "the Satan (enemy of the soul), and the Angel of Death (enemy of the physical body)."

 When a Jew goes out to "war" fortified with the knowledge that there is no force in the world able to stand in the face of goodness and holiness, not only are external manifestations of evil vanquished, but its spiritual source is defeated as well. The Torah therefore uses the singular -- enemy -- to allude to the Evil Inclination, the origin and prototype of all misfortune.

 The verse concludes with the words "and you shall take captives of them." If a Jew is not careful and falls prey to the Evil Inclination, all of his higher faculties, given to him by G-d to be utilized for good, also fall into its snare. The Torah teaches that sincere repentance has the power to redeem these captive prisoners, elevating them until even "willful transgressions are considered as merits."

 Such warfare brings Moshiach and the Final Redemption closer, when the Evil Inclination will be totally vanquished and the victory over sin will be permanent.

*Reprinted from the 5756/1996 Parshat Ki Teitzei edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

# Rav Avigdor Miller on

# Dinei Yichud



 **QUESTION:** **You said last week that the takanos of chazal are for our benefit. Can you give an example?**

 **ANSWER:** I could give tens of examples, hundreds, but I’ll choose one. Do you know how lucky we are that we have the din of yichud?  Sometimes yichud seems to be a hardship but actually it’s a salvation for us.  How many triangles were avoided because of yichud! How many tragedies!

 We think, “Well, decent people won’t fall into sins.” But the chachomim didn’t rely on us.  They said, “Nothing doing!  Like the world says, “Love finds a way.”  And so they made a takana, you cannot be together in the same private place where a woman is. A man should never be alone in a place with a strange woman. No matter what the circumstances are, no matter how good their intentions are.

 That’s one of the beautiful takanos that have kept the Jewish nation pure and clean down to recently. It’s remarkable with what severity the Am Yisroel practices this – all the frum Jews observe the details to this day. And of course, the results demonstrate how wise the policy is because those who don’t have this law of yichud are constantly victims of circumstances that are tragic; besides making them broken people morally their lives are ruined. It happens all the time among them. Here is a man, a gentile; could be he doesn’t mean any harm, but he happens to be alone with a female.  And it happens.  He’s human and he’s nichshal.  He stumbles.  He does a cheit and his life is ruined.

 But boruch Hashem the Am Yisroel is protected. Among Jews it can never happen.  A frum Jew is never alone with a female.  Yichud!  We’re protected by our Torah. How lucky we are!  that we have dinim of yichud! For that alone, we should be forever grateful to the chachomim.

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**Can My Life Be Perfect**

**Even Without a Child?**

**By**[**Chana Margulies**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/24003/jewish/Margulies-Chana.htm)



**Art by**[**Rivka Korf Studio**](https://www.chabad.org/4375450)

 Three months ago, I was lying down when I got the call from my doctor. Every last piece of paperwork, injection, anesthesia, procedure, waiting-room marathon that I’d endured to get to this moment evaporated with four simple words: “Don’t come in today.”

 My bag was packed. I had visualized this pregnancy, preparing my body for weeks. I had packed the bags of my life for one destination only: motherhood.

 I sat up. Thank you, G‑d, for freeing me, I forced myself to say. I thought this was something I needed to do for You, [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm). For years, I was convinced this was the mission that You gave me. Thank you for freeing me!

 I danced around the room, jumping up and down on the bed with my hands stroking the ceiling. This bed ... If the procedure had happened today, I would have been on bedrest for days, weeks, months? My body, which felt so fragile moments ago, jumped down onto the hard wooden floors.

**Cancer Radiation Will Destory Her**

**Chance to Have Children**

 I was 18 when my oncologist looked at me and said that I would never carry my own pregnancy. The radiation to kill the cancer would destroy that opportunity. That is when the promise was born within me. I will prove him wrong. I will show him what G‑d can do.

 Every one of the next five doctors who confirmed his prognosis only made this new fire burn stronger.

 As soon as we married, I was determined to show everyone just what G‑d can do. What this body is capable of. Lying on the radiation table each day I would visualize walking into my doctor’s office with my crew of children. I would prove him wrong.

 Staring at the ceiling as the phone went dead, I realized I’ve been living in the shadow of that promise. It finally hit me: I care more about that promise than myself, or G‑d.

 Who said this is what G‑d wants from me? To re-traumatize myself in the medical world? To hurt this body with procedures and injections?

This promise has become an idol in my holy temple, and G‑d kindly let it come crashing down. It shattered into a million pieces. My ego died that day. I felt broken for weeks.

 Who am I without this desperate identity?

 Who am I when not pathetically yearning for something that I don’t have?

 Who am I if I’m not feeling bad for myself, hating everyone for being so arrogantly blessed with what I should have?!

 My ego had set up shop in my inner sanctuary and had been calling the shots for so long, it didn’t appreciate the wake-up call.

 Now broken and open, I began to ask: What do You, G‑d, actually want from me? When You put this soul into this body, in this exact generation, what was Your vision? G‑d help me live Your wildest dreams for me.

 My eyes shut tightly on the couch as the pain of the disappointment filled my chest. G‑d, do you love me?

 An image of a piece of chocolate melting in a metal pan flashed through my mind. I breathed a little deeper. Just as it is a simple law of nature that when heated chocolate melts, the most simple and abundant truth is that G‑d loves me. This entire world including a piece of chocolate melting on the stove is an expression of his love for me. My entire existence is G‑d writing me a love letter.

 *What do you think the entire cosmos and life I have given you is meant to show you? Yes, My dear child, I love you. I want you to feel the sunshine on your back as My love for you. To see ducklings hatching as My love for you. Your iPhone ringing with someone who loves you from across the globe as My love for you. This life is My expression of love for you*. *Please start enjoying it.*

 I have lived the identity of a warrior, a fighter, a champion of defiance against statistics and doctors. Now I needed to ask myself, who am I without that identity?

 I realize that I don’t know what it means to just feel good in my body. The[Lubavitcher] Rebbe taught that one’s personal *galut* (“exile”) is living in stress, and *geulah* (“personal redemption”) is living tranquility.

 I know what fear and disappointment and anguish feel like; I have experienced the feeling of my twisting stomach. But what does living *geulah* feel like in my body?

 I lay on the couch and feel the space around me. G‑d, You fill the world, You are filling this space. I felt held and protected. The couch was G‑d holding me through this material world.

 Our forefather Abraham said, *Kel Olam,* “G‑d and world” in one breath. Not *Kel****Ha****Olam,* “G‑d of the world;” rather, *G‑d-world*, meaning the world exists within G‑d. I felt like a baby in the womb. I let this love fill my head, chest, stomach and pinky toes, and wash away the pain that had ravaged it for weeks.

 I want to learn what it means to feel good in my body. To be OK with being OK. To make G‑d the one I worship through my body, my mini-holy temple.

**A Lovely Sunset Picnic**

 Ariel and I went for a lovely sunset picnic, a checkered red-and-white blanket, a wicker basket filled with rosé and pasta. We saw a long-lost friend pushing her stroller and walked over to admire her adorable baby. She sighed and with a look of pity said, “Please G‑d, you should be blessed.” She repeated it over and over. I put my hand on her shoulder. “I am good,” I said.

 What do you mean, her eyes screamed? How are you OK with your miserable existence? Her brown eyes asked.

 I didn’t have an answer, but I understood her question.

 For so long, I’ve fought reality and begged G‑d for a baby. I went into a realm of medical hell to bring down the blessings. I’d done everything physically possible to bring down that blessing and G‑d said, no.

 And now, I must begin my healing journey. Healing from worshipping a promise that hurt me. Healing from this belief that I must be miserable. That it is a sin to be OK; that it is holy to be stressed out.

 It’s work to feel G‑d in my body. It’s work to focus on living in an inner world of *menucha*, tranquility, but it feels like holy work.

 My focus now is feeling G‑d in my inner sanctuary, letting Him in. Slowly making more space, as I let go of my ego’s 10-year plan and open myself up to G‑d flowing through me in this perfect moment.



 Raised on an organic farm in Canada, Chana Margulies now lives in the mystical city of Tzfat with her husband Ariel. She teaches, gives mikvah tours and challah-baking workshops, coaches couples, and speaks about her journey through cancer treatment. Reach out to introduce yourself or for coaching services and speaking engagements.

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