

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Ki Teitzei	14 Sept. 2019	14 Elul 5779	Deut. 21:10-25:19	Isa. 54:1-10	Matt. 24:29-42

In Devarim 21:10-14, the Torah describes the laws of captivity during the war. “When you go out to fight” – The sages teach that this is an optional war against the enemies. The primary spiritual war that we are required to fight is the battle to rid ourselves of whatever evil resides within us. While part of the Divine mission is to rid the evil at large, the success depends on our ability to how successful we have been in subjugating and eliminating our own personal evil. The theatre of our inner spiritual battle with evil is daily prayer, in which we strive to empower our Divine souls over our human-animal souls. The Zohar is firm, “The time of prayer is a time of battle.”

The war itself is against human nature as our soul’s native environment is the peacefulness, from the Divine consciousness it experienced before entering the body. So, instead of direct confrontation with evil, we can also fight indirectly by studying the Torah as it fills our consciousness with Divine awareness. And the awareness can dissipate the evil within us. Whereas the direct confrontation of prayer requires a lot of efforts, but the effect of Torah is virtually automatic as it is said, “Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, whenever there is an option to do away with evil peacefully, through Torah study, taking the alternate route – that of direct engagement in prayer – becomes an “optional” war. Eliminating evil through Torah study obviates the need to battle evil in prayer, transmuting prayer into a simple, serene expansion of Divine consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

“Against your enemies” – Since we originate in Hashem’s essence, we have the upper hand over evil even before the battle has begun. As we know that Hashem is intrinsic and the rest of creation’s existence is contingent on His existence. So, it is illogical that anyone or anything could be an enemy to Hashem. How could a pot oppose to the potter? The answer is that Hashem created the world in such a way that its dependence on Him is not only hidden by appears to be contradicted by empirical evidence. Hashem Himself is therefore responsible for the facts that there are elements of this world that deny or oppose Him, as well as people in it who do the same.<sup>3</sup>

The reason that Hashem did this is so that we could win these enemies of holiness over to the side of holiness, thereby demonstrating that even this darkness can be made into His home. Hashem embedded a sense of logic and order into reality when He created the world. Thus, the existence of the enemies defies the logic which indicates that in order to create them, He had to use a creative power that originates in a higher Divinity than that which He used to create the rest of creation.

“Captives” refers to the elements of reality, both the physical world and of humanity’s consciousness that have fallen into the hands of evil, i.e., the mundane or anti-Divine worldliness that pervades reality. It also means overcoming the evil inclination to seduce us into actions contrary to the purpose of creation with persistence. Thus we are to persist in fulfilling the purpose of our creation, that is to reveal His holiness through learning Hashem’s Torah and performing His commandments.

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 3:17

<sup>2</sup> Likkutei Sichot, vol. 14, pp. 84-85

<sup>3</sup> Torah, Devarim, Ki Teitzei, P. 124

The Maggid of Mezeritch explains that this passage refers to a temporary loss of Divine consciousness and how we can restore it. “If you go out” – When you leave your state of oneness with Hashem, “to war” – to contend with your evil inclination and the enticement of the world. “If you see among the captives” – the captives are all aspects of the materiality of this world, in which there are captive sparks of Divinity. “A beautiful woman” – If you find yourself beckoned by the external beauty of physical reality, “And you take her” – you must not succumb to the aspect of what you see, but rather you should take it, “as a wife” – You should elevate the Divine sparks in the materiality you confront to their Divine source rather than allowing the experience of this world to drag you further away from Hashem to enhance your relationship with Hashem.

“If you see a beautiful woman” (v. 11) – Allegorically, this verse signifies the aspect of our consciousness that had been trapped in the materiality of the world. Redeeming this “captive” occurs on two levels: the intellect and the emotions which must be cleansed of their material orientation in order to be restored to full Divine consciousness.

“She must shave her head” (v. 12) – It signifies the residual life-force of the intellect, that is unnecessary intellectual indulgences in the culture of decadence and vanity. “And trim her nails” – eliminating superfluous emotional indulgences in the same since action, represented by the hands, is the expression of the emotions.

“And put aside the mantle of her captivity” (v. 13) – The garments are the power of expression: thought, speech, and action. Once we have trimmed ourselves of excess intellectual and emotional indulgences, we must then deprive of thoughts, talking, and actions of that culture.

“And mourn her father and her mother a month of days” – This refers to the month of Elul which we prepare to renew our relationship with Hashem. The renunciation of excess materialism which alluded by shaving the head and trimming the nails is sufficient for the rest of the year, but the self renewal to which we aspire in the month of Elul can only occur only if we intensify our desire to attain Divine consciousness. To this end, our Divine soul must “weep for her father (*chochmah*) and mother (*binah*),” i.e. yearn for the Divine awareness it knew before it was “taken captive” in this physical world.

“When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof” (Devarim 22:8) – Even though the roofs of older houses require railings to protect the people from falling, the Torah emphasizes on “new” which signifies that one’s house should be used for renewal: within its walls, a person should continually strive to renew his commitment to Torah. To succeed, he should build a safeguard for his “roof”, that is his intellect. You place a guardrail around your mind in order to protect it from evil thoughts. If you do not guard your mind, you are guilty of “putting blood on your house.”

“Do not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed” (22:9) – Each type of seed draws Hashem’s blessings from its own source. When planted separately, each seed draws Hashem’s blessings in a quantity that we can handle. Mixing seeds invokes an overabundance of blessing that generates too much light for us to bear. Hashem’s blessings are beneficial only when received in measure.<sup>4</sup>

“Do not plough with an ox and a donkey together” (22:10) – Ritually pure animals represent good thoughts, and ritually impure animals represent evil thoughts. Thus, we cannot plow through life with both of these

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<sup>4</sup> Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 270

types of thoughts together. The ox represents all ritually pure animals and the donkey as all ritually impure animals. When Ya'akov returned from Lavan's house, he sent a message to Esav: "I have bulls and donkeys" (B'resheet 32:5) indicating that he had subdued all types of "animals" (his material desires, even the permitted ones) to Hashem.<sup>5</sup> How did Esav respond? "I have enough." (ibid, 33:9) Meaning, he has succumbed to his desires.

The Zohar<sup>6</sup> explains that the ox and the donkey represents two evil types. They allude to Esav and Yishamel which is a generic name for the forces of evil. Anything done to mix things together even if the act or intention is initially pure, gives strength to the Other Side. When Ya'akov sent animals to Esav, he divided the animals and "drove by itself" (B'resheet 32:16), meaning he did not mix the animals.

"Do not put a garment of different kinds, of wool and linen together." (22:11) – There are several explanations to this verse and we will go through each one of them. First, wool represents *chesed* (kindness), and linen represents *gevurot* (judgments). These are complete opposite and can never be put together, except by a human being. Because a human being has *da'at* (intellect), he has the capacity to bring opposites together.

The sages explain that a person is permitted to sew wool and linen together, yet he may not wear it. The reason is that the world contains an admixture of good and evil as a result of Adam's eating from the Tree. When the garments are joined not for the sake of a *mitzvah* (deed), the Other Side draws nourishment from it and evil cannot be mitigated. The *da'at* formed from the joining of wool and linen creates the *da'at* of the Other Side. But, when the two are joined for the sake of a *mitzvah*, since *tzitzit* is a *mitzvah*, by affixing *tzitzit* that contains *tekheilet* (blue) threads to a linen garment, then he can wear *sha'anez* (שְׂאֵנֶז, a combination of wool and linen), for the *da'at* formed from the joining of wool and linen is holy *da'at*.<sup>7</sup>

Second, wool represents the light of Hashem illuminating us through the righteous, whereas linen is the concealed light of Hashem. He cannot wear a garment sewn with wool and linen as it obscures the light and obstructs it from illuminating. However, by affixing *tzitzit* as it is a *mitzvah*, the light of the *mitzvah* illumines and matter does not obstruct the light.

Third, wearing clothes became necessary after Adam sinned. Before the sin, Adam and Chava wore "garments of light" as they were designed to benefit from Hashem's light directly. But, now after the sin, it (light) comes to him "dressed up" and concealed with "garments." These garments are represented by the cherubim stationed at the entrance to the Gan Eden, which man must now somehow get past in order to return to the Gan Eden, to the light of Hashem.

Wool refers to the great light of Hashem; linen refers to the judgments and constrictions. Thus, linen must not be mixed with wool because judgments and constrictions obscure rather than reveal the light of Hashem. However, he may combine wool and linen by affixing *tzitzit* that contains *tekheilet* to a linen garment. Because performing the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* negates the negative effects of wool and linen, and reveals the light of Hashem.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Likutey Halakhot V, p. 374

<sup>6</sup> Zohar 1, 166b

<sup>7</sup> Likutey Halakhot V, p. 200a-400

<sup>8</sup> Likutey Halakhot I, p. 58

Lastly, wool represents a very lofty level, while linen/flax represents a very low level. When Cayin and Chavel brought their first offering to Hashem, Cayin brought “the fruit of the ground,” that is flaxseed, while Chavel brought “the firstlings of his flock”, that is sheep’s wool. *Tzitzit* which combine woolen threads with a linen garment, represent the power to draw even the lowest levels to Hashem.<sup>9</sup>

“But YHWH your Elohim refused to listen to Bil’am, and YHWH your Elohim turned the curse into a blessing for you, because YHWH your Elohim loves you.” (Devarim 23:5) Bil’am always looked for the worst in everyone and tried his best to bring out the worst in the Yisraelites. He tried to remind Hashem that they had sinned grievously when they made the golden calf. But Hashem does not see things the same way as Bil’am. When he tried to look for bad, Hashem looks for the goods by comparing the evil of the Yisraelites to the evil of the nations. Thus, not only did Bil’am fail to curse the Yisraelites, but Hashem used his evil intentions to benefit them and transform his curses into blessings. The more Bil’am tried to arouse the evil of the Yisraelites, the more Hashem noticed their good deeds instead.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p. 34a

<sup>10</sup> *Likutey Halakhot V*, p. 268a-536