Parshas Ki Teitzei 2022, building fences

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah. And in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

Our Parsha continues Moshe's final address to Jewish people. He begins with the law of how a soldier can marry a female captive of war. A mandate that a firstborn son always has a right to a double portion of his father's property. The unique law of a Ben Sorer Umoreh - a rebellious and wayward son.

A Ben Sorer Umoreh is a boy at the specific age of 12 and a half years old who is extremely disobedient and violates certain unique and strange conditions. Some of these conditions steal money to buy special wine, meat, and other unusual requirements. If the boy meets all the conditions required to be a Ben Sorer Umoreh, he is put to death by stoning at the city gates.

However, a question comes to mind: We have previously spoken about the Ben Sorer Umoreh - a rebellious and wayward son. (Go to Parshaperspective.com to listen to the episode or download the article) But Moshe continues to give many Mitzvahs; amongst them is the Mitzvah of building a fence. When a person builds a new home, they are required to construct a fence on their roof. But although this fence is extremely important from a safety perspective, does building it need to be a specific Mitzvah? Why is it a Biblical commandment?!

The Rabbeinu Bachya *(Rav Bachya Ben Asher, a Spanish commentary)* gives a simple explanation. He writes that the Torah mentioned previously (Veschanan 4:9) **"look out for- yourself and guard your life especially."** Since the property owner can be liable for negligence, Moshe emphasizes this safety measure.

The Pasuk concludes (22:8), *"So that you will not bring guilt on your home if anyone shall fall from it."* This indicates that the homeowner is at fault and responsible if someone falls from their roof. Since failure to build this fence can lead to the death of a precious human being, it is a Biblical commandment to construct a barrier to protect and preserve life.

However, Rashi *(Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah)* gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that the Pasuk above speaks about the Mitzvah of sending away the bird before taking her young. Moshe Rabbeinu is stating that if we perform that Mitzvah, not only will we receive the stated reward, a long life. But also a home for ourselves and our families to enjoy and experience that long life.

Rashi continues that the next Pasukim are laws regarding vineyards, fields, and animals. He explains that if we follow this commandment and construct a fence, we will merit to plant and enjoy wine from our vineyards. To spend the money we profit from the wool and leather that our animals provide.

Moshe Rabbeinu gives us a step-by-step guide to thoroughly enjoy our physical and spiritual lives. It begins by following G-d's commands, like sending away the mother, even if we don't understand. When we receive the reward for that action, we will have new ways to thank G-d and truly see how all our blessings are from Him. As the opportunity to do many good deeds stems from doing a good deed, especially if we don't want to or understand it.

This immensely powerful lesson is especially relevant as we prepare for the days of judgment and atonement. Part of our preparation should be the addition of new Mitzvahs daily for a year of spiritual blessings and physical rewards.

In our daily life, it is imperative we realize that altruistic actions pave the path for satisfaction, meaning, and happiness to flow into our souls. When we are kind and charitable to others, we build a community that brings out the best in each other. They join in our celebrations and uplift us when we are downhearted or sad. Most importantly, they allow us to do the same and share our soul's light with the world.

"Act the way you'd like to be and soon you will be the way you act."

Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini