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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

#### פרשת כי תצא

כִּי תֵצֵא לְמִלְחָמָה עַל אִיְבֹיֶיךָ וְכֹו', וְרָאִיתָ בְּשִׁבְיָהּ אִשָּׁת יִפֶּת תֹּאֵר וְכֹו', וְלָקַחְתָּ לָּךְ לְאִשָּׁה. (דברים כא, י-יא)  
*When you will go out to war against your enemies ... and you will see amongst its captivity a beautiful woman ... and you will take her to yourself for a wife. (Devorim 21:10)*

This week's *Sidrah* starts with the unusual law of *yefas toar*, which applies when going out to war. Towards the end of last week's *Sidrah*, *Shoftim*, various *parshiyos* discuss warfare and siege-related *halachos*. This theme is interrupted by the law of *eglah arufah*, which applies when a body of a murdered person is found in the countryside and it is not known who killed him. The Meforshim question the placement of *eglah arufah*, and explore why it interrupts the *parshiyos* related to war.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* brings a fundamental lesson from the Chofetz Chaim to explain the connection. He explains that during wartime when many people are dying on all fronts, a man may become desensitized to the value of life and numb to the worth of an individual. For this reason, the Torah interrupts discussing warfare with the *parshah* of *eglah arufah*, which teaches us the incredible value of every single person. Although the victim is unknown and not recognized to be a great person, it is still a great tragedy for which all Klal Yisroel need atonement. To understand and appreciate the extent of this calamity, one must ponder and appreciate the immense spiritual potential every person is capable of. This unknown fatality may have experienced great spiritual growth, and his death resulted in this being impeded, requiring Klal Yisroel a significant atonement.

During times of war, when countless people are dying all around, many people may forget the value of human life, including their own self-worth. This can be especially true for soldiers who are focused on defeating the enemy, often without considering the loss of life involved. This could help explain why there is a special allowance in the Torah for a warrior to marry a non-Jewish captive woman. As Rashi cites Chazal: *לא דברה תורה אלא כנגד יצר הרע, שאם אין הקב"ה מתירה, ישאנה באיסור*, *The Torah spoke only against the yetser horah, for if Hashem would not make her permissible, he would marry her in a forbidden manner*. The Torah concedes that an individual's sense of self-worth can be particularly vulnerable during times of war. Since this soldier is unable to find the usual strength necessary to overcome the *yetser horah*, he is granted this unique allowance.

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Chukas*) relates the story of Moshe Rabbeinu ascending to Shomayim and hearing the voice of Hashem saying, "Eliezer, my son, says that when a Torah says *פרה* (regarding the *parah adumah*), it means a cow in her second year, and when it says *עגלה* (regarding the *eglah arufah*) it means a cow in her first year." Moshe then asked Hashem why He, as Master of all worlds, took interest in repeating a *halachah* in the name of a mortal man. Hashem replied that there would be a *tzaddik* called R' Eliezer in the future who would begin Maseches Parah with this *halachah* and thus merited to be quoted by Hashem.

The Rosh Yeshiva explains that R' Eliezer's statement is important not only because it is the opening *mishnah* in Parah, but also because this saying holds further significance, as evident from that which Rebbi HaKadosh chose it as the start for Maseches Parah. He explains that there is significance in understanding the age difference required for the *parah adumah* and *eglah arufah*. An animal in its second year has lived through a whole year, experiencing different seasons and situations. Such an animal is used for *taharah* and purifying impure people, symbolising how a person who has experienced life's hardships and challenges but has nonetheless succeeded and survived can purify others.

On the other hand, the *eglah*, being within its first year, has not experienced the different seasons and situations that arise throughout the year. This represents the great loss of a person who is murdered in the middle of their life. Their life's achievements are impossible to conceive, since as long as a person is alive, they have the power to rise above life's circumstances and improve themselves. We take the young animal and behead it to illustrate the loss of life and potential of someone struck down at the height of life, who hasn't had the chance to live through different stages of life and succeed.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 46a), cited by Rashi, mentions a reference to this concept. It questions why the Torah commands bringing a calf that has not done any work or pulled a yoke and breaking its neck in a firm uncultivated valley, that has both not been worked and will not be sown in the future. The Gemara explains that Hashem said: "Let a calf in its first year, which has not yet produced fruit, come and have its neck broken in a place which does not produce fruit, to atone for the death of this one whom they did not allow to produce fruit." The Gemara further clarifies that the "lack of fruit" does not refer to physical offspring (because accordingly, this *halachah* would not apply where the murdered was an elderly person), but rather to spiritual potential. While a person is alive, they have the opportunity to grow and elevate themselves producing spiritual "fruit". The *eglah* was brought to act as an atonement for this loss of spiritual potential.

Let us draw inspiration from the lesson above and recognise the remarkable worth of every individual, including ourselves. Despite encountering a lack of awareness about people's abilities and spiritual potential, we should not let these attitudes influence us. We all have incredible potential for growth, so let's acknowledge this and strive to elevate ourselves in the best way possible.

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).