

We can explain with an important יסוד based on a 'אור החיים הק' (י"ה, ב') in פרשת אחרי מות (י"ה, ב'): It's well known that any מצוה or איסור which the רבש"ע commanded us to do – a person can withstand. A person can keep the entire תורה. A person can keep any מצוה and can refrain from any עבירה. However, there is one matter in the תורה which a person cannot withstand, the מצוה of העריות. It is such a big drive until the extent that one is not able to resist; unless, a person is cautious with two things: (1) שמירת עינים – what he looks at, (2) שמירת המחשבה – what a person thinks about. If a person is not careful what he looks at or what he thinks about, a person will not be able to control himself and avoid נסיונות which come as a result of seeing things he shouldn't see. It's almost impossible, teaches the אור החיים.

This can begin to answer our question: When a person is out in war "וראית בה", and you will SEE a תאר יפת, the person will not be able to control himself. Consequently, if he is going to marry her באיסור the תורה permits it.

What is truly the understanding why the matter of עריות and טומאה is different to all the other תאוות which the תורה forbids?

הקב"ה offered the תורה to all the nations of the world before מתן תורה. This was their last chance of becoming the הנבחר עם. Nevertheless, once they heard what was in the תורה they all rejected the offer. On the other hand, כלל ישראל immediately without even asking what's in the תורה replied, "נעשה ונשמע". Tremendous! "יצא בת קול ואמרה, מי גילה רז זה" "לבני...!"

In 1917, after the Russian revolution, they made a new law in Russia that half of what one own's must be given to Mother Russia. They sent agents across Russia to ensure the citizens were keeping to the law. An agent reaches a small village, knocks on one of the doors and a peasant opens up. "If you own two farms," asks the agent, "what will you do?"

"Of course, I will give one to Mother Russia," replied the peasant.

"And if you own two herds what will you do?" asked the agent.

"One to Mother Russia!" was the response.

"And if you own two cows?"

"One to Mother Russia!"

“Two sheep?”

“One to Mother Russia.”

“And if you own two chickens,” asked the agent, “what will you do?”

The peasant began racking his brain deep in thought, “*what will I do?! What will I do if I have two chickens?!*”

“Tell me something young man,” says the agent, “I don’t understand; a farm you are prepared to give away. A herd you are prepared to give away. A cow you are prepared to give away. So what is the problem with giving away a chicken?!”

The answer is: he had two chickens! From what he doesn’t have, obviously he is prepared to give away.

What is exactly so great about נעשה ונשנע? כלל ישראל do not even know what’s written on the *contract*! Have we asked "מה כתיב ביה" and the רבש"ע would have replied "לא תלך", would we still have immediately responded "נעשה ונשמע"? With hearing "לא תקם" or "לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך" would we still have accepted the תורה?

Explains ר' לייב גורביץ זצ"ל understood that the רבש"ע only does good, He is kind, and He is perfect. Hashem is not going to swindle us. כלל ישראל understood that if הקב"ה is offering them the תורה, i.e. making a contract with them; if they can’t keep the conditions of the contract, He won’t give it to them. And even if it’s *taka* not possible to keep certain parts of the תורה, with the תורה, הקב"ה will give us the strength to keep it. This is what כלל ישראל knew at מתן תורה. כלל ישראל understood: הקב"ה will not give us something we cannot accomplish. When signing a contract with הקב"ה there is no need to know what is written in it, because afterwards the רבש"ע will give us the כוחות to be able to keep up the conditions of the contract. The רבש"ע will give the power to accomplish anything we must do written in the contract. As חז"ל teach this is the understanding in the פסוק, "ה' עוז לעמו יתן" – at מתן תורה the רבש"ע gave us "עוז" – strength and power to be able keep the מצוות of the תורה. Moreover, the רבש"ע promised to help us, "ונתנה ה' אלקיך בידך".

In the תורה it is stated we must not eat חזיר and שרצים. The תורה tells us not to speak לשון הרע. But we must understand whatever the תורה commands us to do, we have the strength to do it. We must try and the רבש"ע will give us the full ס"ד. Whatever the תורה tells us

not to do we again have the power not to do it. In the תורה lies the כח with which we will be able to keep the תורה, "ה' עוז לעמו יתן", A מלאך has got phenomenal powers, it can fly across galaxies in seconds. Nonetheless, it can only move when it's given instructions to do so. The fuel is the דיבור ה'. Similarly, when we want to do a מצוה the fuel lies in the מצוה. However, there is one part of תורה where the תורה not only does it tell us not to do something, but it also tells us to make a גדר to stop you doing it: "ולא תתרו אחרי לבבכם" "ואחרי עיניכם". The תורה tells us, DON'T LOOK! DON'T THINK!

When a person walks past a טריפה butcher the תורה will give the person the strength to control his temptations. The תורה also gives a person the כח not to look at the wrong things, but once a person has seen it, nothing is stopping you from doing an עבירה.

In the "ולא תתרו" the תורה gives us the power not to look, the power not to think; but once we have gone past that stage – it's too late. That is how the אור החיים הקדוש explains פרישת העריות. All the rest of תורה, לשון הרע and טריפות a person will find the power within himself not to speak לשון הרע or eat טריפות. However, when it comes to עריות the תורה is telling us not to look and not to think, accordingly, we all have the strength from the תורה not to look or think, but once a person has looked and thought it's simply too late. The תורה is telling us to stop before. Accordingly, once a person is in battle, he hasn't got a choice and sees it, it's too late and therefore it is then when the תורה tells her, "באיסור בהיתר so that he you won't need to marry her."

Constantly, a איד must be מחזק himself in the ענין of שמירת עינים. If a person want's to be מצליח in התמדה בתורה or in עבודת ה' he must be careful to guard his eyes and thoughts, especially in today's day and age. It's vital, because that is the גדר the תורה put into place and once we go over the גדר ח"ו it's extremely difficult. When a person guards his eyes, he brings a tremendous קדושה upon himself so that when משיח comes he will see tremendous גילוי שכינה. We must try and when we try the רבש"ע will give us the ס"ד, "ונתנה ה' אלקיך בידך".

In the זכות of using our eyes properly, may we be זוכה to the fulfilment of the תפילה in שמו"ע, "ותחזינה, שמו"ע – "כי עין בעין יראו בשוב ה' ציון", ישעיה (נ"ב, ח') "עיינו בשוכך לציון ברחמים". *With their own eyes they will see Hashems returns to ציון.*

"The value of Jewish life"

begins with the פרשה of מלחמה, war, "כי תצא למלחמה על איביך", *When you will go out to war against your enemy*. If we look in פרשת שופטים there are three פרשיות dealing with the topic of מלחמה, (1) "כי תצא למלחמה על איביך... לא תירא מהם" (2) "כי תקרב אל עיר להלחם" (3) "כי תצא למלחמה על איביך... לא תירא מהם" (1) *When you go out to battle against your enemy... you shall not fear them. 2) When you draw near to a city to wage war against it... 3) When you besiege a city for many days...*

There are four פרשיות which discuss מלחמה in total, three in פרשת שופטים and one in פרשת עגלה ערופה. The question is why in the end of פרשת שופטים there is a פרשה discussing עגלה ערופה, when we find a dead body between two cities, and we are uncertain which city is to blame. If there are four פרשיות which discuss מלחמה, why is it interrupted with a פרשה of עגלה ערופה? Shouldn't the four פרשיות be put together?

Everything a person does in life, his actions are משפיע on him. If a person is naturally merciful and kind and then he does a מעשה אכזריות, a ruthless action, he is ruining his מדה of רחמים. If he completes a number of ruthless acts, eventually he becomes an אכזרי. Likewise, if a person is naturally born an אכזרי and he performs a number of מעשי חסד, he slowly becomes a kind person. He changes the מדות that he was born with.

In פרשת וינתן the תורה tells us we must wipe out an עיר הנידחת, and there it is stated, "ונתן לך רחמים וריחמך...". The אור החיים הקדוש teaches: A person who wipes out an entire city including men, woman and children, can make a person into an אכזרי. Accordingly, the הקב"ה promises us a new כח הרחמים to destroy the מידת אכזריות which came as a result of killing many men, woman and children. A person is מושפע from what he sees.

A special power of רחמים will be infused into the person after an עיר הנידחת has been destroyed. There is a famous story told of an Israeli soldier who fought against the Egyptians in the יום כיפור war. He was a frontline fighter and he killed many Egyptians. He came to ר' שך זצ"ל after the war and related his feelings that he feels he has become an אכזרי after killing so many people. He felt his מידת הרחמים had been destroyed.

ר' שך זצ"ל pointed to this אור החיים הק' and he explained to the soldier that he must work hard on replacing his מידת הרחמים which was lost. A person is affected from what he sees and his actions.

In a time of war, human life becomes cheap. You see *nebach* pictures of the Warsaw ghetto and it's often shocking to see quite clearly dead people lying on the floor and people just walking past oblivious. When we see a dead body, we freak out. But people

there are just walking on the street and kids are playing, just a few feet away from a dead body. In a time of battle life becomes cheap. Human life loses its value.

When the town of Pressburg was under siege, every night cannons would fall into Pressburg and dozens of people were killed from the bombardment. During the time of the siege, a איד was arrested because of being accused as a spy by giving messages to the enemy where to bomb. They proclaimed his penalty as being death. The חתם סופר went to the commander to try and beg to let him free.

The commander said to the חתם סופר, "What do you care? There are dozens of Jews dying every day. Guilty or not. It's just another person?!"

The חתם סופר explained to the commander the חשיבות of human life, how important every moment is. He pleaded with the commander until they let him free.

Our answer is very clear. At the time of war life becomes cheap. When we find a dead body between two cities during war not related to the battle, we might have thought, 'nu, another person dead.' NO! No such thing says the תורה. How did he die? Why did he die? Whose fault is it? You bring the סנהדרין הגדול to come and they proceed with a whole ceremony how to process what happened. It's no light matter when a person is found dead and we are unsure who caused his death – EVEN AT THE TIME OF WAR. The תורה is telling us to NEVER lose focus concerning the importance of human life.

Why has human life got such an importance?

Our existence doesn't begin when we are born, and nor does it begin from nine months before we are born. We rather exist from the beginning of creation until the end of time. We only spend a few years down below on the physical world. The essence of a human being is his נשמה. The time we spend in our bodies is a minuscule amount of time in comparison to our complete existence. Accordingly, why has חשיבות got such an importance if its only for a few years?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe – ר' יוסף יצחק זצ"ל – after the Russian revolution set up an organisation across Russia for לימוד התורה. Eventually, the Russians got hold of him and tortured him to try to divulge the names of the people he had employed to help set up this network of לימוד התורה. He wouldn't say a word.

After many weeks he was taken to a tough interrogator who happened to be a *freier* איד. After a few hours of interrogation, the Rebbe didn't say a word. Apparently, when they hit him, he didn't even move. Finally, the interrogator took out his gun, cleared his voice and exclaimed, "If you don't begin telling me the names of these people, I am going to pull the trigger."

The Rebbe sat opposite and just smiled. The integrator was shocked, "I don't understand! I've done this so many times. When I pull out my gun people go white. They faint or they start shaking. But you are sitting relaxed?! Even smiling! How is it possible?"

"Well," replied the Rebbe, "it's very simple. To the people you interrogate, the gun means THE END. They believe when a person dies its game over. The gun symbolises their end. Whereas, regarding myself, I can carry on. I can carry on for a long time. All the gun is doing is dispatching me from one place to the other. Nevertheless, my exitance continues, so why should I fear your gun?!"

The integrator was shocked and put his gun back into its socket and began thinking about the words of the Rebbe.

The תורה tells us the פרשה of עגלה ערופה within the פרשיות of מלחמה: Don't get carried away in the time of battle to lose focus on the importance of human life.

חז"ל teach us, "יפה שעה אחת של קורת אחת בעולם הבא מכל חיי עולם הזה", *One whiff of pleasure which a person has in the next world is worth more than all the pleasures of this world.*

The ספרים explain: Imagine feeling in one second the pleasures equivalent to all the pleasures you have had your entire life. Imagine feeling the pleasures of all the people in Masncheter in one second. Imagine feeling a whiff of all the pleasures which all the people in England have experienced from the day they were born. To cut the long story short: Imagine taking all the pleasures which all the billions of people who have lived on this planet had from the moment GO at the time of creation until now! Imagine experiencing a pleasure equivalent to all those pleasures in one whiff! You cannot imagine in your wildest imagination what type of pleasure that will give you. And חז"ל tell us, one moment of pleasure in the next world is greater than all the pleasures which have ever been on this planet from the beginning of time until the end of time.

What makes us receive such pleasure?

Every little thing we do למען ה'. Yes, every little thing is tremendous. Every little thing we do gives us this whiff which is greater מכל חיי עולם הזה. This whiff is not just for a second, it's for נצחיות.

ר' שמחה זיסל זצ"ל explains what נצחיות means: Take the biggest hall you have ever been in – an air hanger. Imagine the hall is filled with poppy seeds. For weeks and weeks lorries come and fill up the hall till its roof. You can't give a figure to how many poppy seeds are in that hall. Trillions and trillions of poppy seeds. Imagine once every two

million years a little bird comes and eats one poppy seed. How many years will it take to empty the hall? That amount of years that it takes to empty the hall is not נצחיות! נצחיות is more than that.

For every little thing we do. Every אמן. Every ברכה. Every good word to another friend. Every word of לימוד התורה. Every חסד. Every time we get out of bed when we don't want to. Every effort we put into our lives we receive a reward which is worth more than all the pleasures which have been from the time of creation until the end of time. And that reward is ours forever! This gives a tremendous value to human life. Human life has tremendous value. Every moment is precious. Every moment we are here a person can earn a tremendous amount.

Time is precious. By the גוים they call it killing time. By us there is no such thing of killing time. We don't kill time. Time has tremendous חשיבות. The people who are doing nothing have the most depressed lives. Rather it's the people who are busy achieving and accomplishing who are the happiest people. When we use time, it will make us happier people.

This is also a very important message before ראש השנה. There was a man who had come from a family who had been in the wine business for 14 – 15 generations. His cellar consisted with many barrels of wine. With just one bottle of wine from one of those barrels this man could support his family for an entire year! He had wine which was 300 years old.

One day he had a distinguished guest who came to visit him. He called for his butler to go down to his cellar to bring a glass of his most precious wine. The butler goes down and they wait five minutes, ten minutes... it's already twenty minutes, "What is taking him so long?"

He goes to the cellar door which is normally locked, and he finds it unlocked. Only two people have the key, himself and the butler. He smells the smell of wine. The casks are sealed so tightly so there should be no reason to smell wine. He goes down the stairs and to his horror he sees the taps of the casks on and his wine going straight down the drain. He sees with his own eyes his wealth going down the drain.

He runs from barrel to barrel, switching off the taps. What's the butler doing? Has he gone crazy? Where is he? He looks around the house for the butler, but he can't find him.

He is so annoyed, so he goes to his private office to calm down before facing his guest. He opens the door of his office and to his shock the butler is sitting on his chair,

smoking his pipe and feet on the table! He starts to think of the words to start off his explosion of anger against his butler, and the butler turns to him, "Oh... hello boss! I think it's just time for you to give me a rise; you know I've been working here for five years." You can imagine the atomic bomb exploded immediately.

When it comes to ראש השנה and יום כיפור we are davening for חיים, *life*. We daven to הקב"ה to give us life. What's the life for?

Life is there to be used in the correct way. If we go and waste time and don't use time properly, how can we come on ראש השנה and ask for life for another year? Are we showing הקב"ה that we use and utilize life properly? One of the preparations for ראש השנה and יום כיפור is to utilize time.

The Kelmer מגיד would give the following משל: Imagine a בת קול will come out exclaiming, "All the dead bodies are going to be given a half an hour to live." Imagine, pandemonium breaking loose and people scramble out of their graves. I promise you no one is going to say, "Yankela! I haven't seen you for three hundred years! What's been doing? Where have you been? Remember the olden days?" Nobody is going to start schmoozing around.

The עולם are going to run to the בית המדרש. They will chap the ספרים out of the ספרים *shrunk*. They have half an hour to better their position in the next world. There won't be enough ספרים to go around so people will dive into the שימור boxes to grab any piece of תורה. No one is going to go chap a smoke or play a game.

The מגיד would conclude, "So are we worst off that we are here?" and he would finish off with ringing words, "and who knows if they have half an hour?"

This is the חשיבות החיים.

ר' אלחנן ווסרמן זצ"ל הי"ד in 1942 was eventually killed by the Nazi's *y"m*. יום כיפור in 1942 when dozens of אידן were being shipped off to Auschwitz, ר' אלחנן went to spend יום כיפור in Kelm. Many others followed their leader, and thousands of people flocked to Kelm for that last יום כיפור.

ר' אלחנן זצ"ל was asked to speak before נעילה. At such difficult times what is ר' אלחנן going to tell the people? What inspiration is he going to give over?

In Kelm it was well known to have ספרים shelves surrounding all four walls of the בית המדרש. Where was the ארון הקודש? The ארון הקודש was on top of the shelves. Before קריאת התורה they would wheel in a flight of stairs (like when traveling on a cheap flight) and remove the stairs after the ס"ת had been put back into place. כך היה המנהג בקעלם.

Before נעילה, ר' אלהן gets up and speaks for thirty seconds, "מחאה! רבותי! I want to make a מחאה about the waste of time the people here waste by taking in and out the stairs. From now on the stairs should just remain in here constantly."

At first the עולם were shocked to be hearing such words at נעילה? Was that the message to all the thousands of people who had flocked in and outside the בית המדרש? But it was just a matter of a few moments until the people new very clearly why ר' אלהן told them this just before נעילה. Suddenly it then hit them what ר' אלהן was trying to do. He was trying to tell people during those difficult times: *CHAP-A-RINE EVERY MOMENT! DON'T WASTE TIME!* That was his message: don't waste time, the most important message to be given at such a time.

Every moment, every action – *chap-a-rine*, we can achieve so so much.

There was a great גדול who was extremely ill. The בחורים amongst themselves decided to take a paper and write how many days of their lives they were prepared to give away of their own life for the life of the צדיק. One wrote two days. Another wrote a week. Another wrote five months. One wrote a year.

When they came to the הפץ חיים for an offer, he thought for a moment and then said, "Three minutes." The הפץ חיים appreciated every minute of life. You can't just give away life! We can achieve so much. Every second is precious.

We don't want to waste time. This is *taka* a very important message for approaching toward the ימים נוראים. We must *chap-a-rine* and work on ourselves to appreciate time and to appreciate our lives which הקב"ה has given us, and then we can come to ראש השנה to plead and ask זכרינו וכתבינו בספר החיים.