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**The Real You**

At the end of this week’s sedra, straight after the harrowing reading of the tochacha, we have the parsha of arachin. Arachin, where a whole masechta in Shas is dedicated to this topic, discusses various pledges of tzedoko to the Beis Hamikdash. A person pledges “I undertake to give the value of a certain person to the Beis Hamikdash” and the Torah sets out how much a person must pay, depending on the gender and age of the person who was the object of the pledge.

The question that many meforshim grapple with is simple. Why here? Why place the parsha of arachin immediately after the tochacha where the Torah lists the frightening punishments for rejecting Torah and mitzvos.

Let me expand on an answer given by the legendary Rabbi Moshe Sherer. Rabbi Sherer used to say that the true value of a person can only be ascertained after he has been through a time of difficulty. When things are going smoothly, the real nature of a person is harder to determine. The real you emerges when things aren’t so smooth.

Although it would seem more logical to place the parsha of arachin earlier in sefer Vayikra, together with other matters that deal with the Mishkan, the Torah waits and places it right at the end of sefer Vayikra, immediately after the tochacha, to show that the real “erech” of a person, his real worth, is only really seen after a period of challenge and stress.

We are called Yisroel based on the possuk where Yakov Ovinu fought with the malach of Eisav.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעִם אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל

And the malach said to Yaakov: “You will no longer be called Yaakov but Yisroel

Because you struggled with angels and men and you overcame them.”

But surely we should be called “Vatuchal” not Yisroel. Isn’t the main point that we were victorious?

No. The main point is that we struggled - כִּי שָׂרִיתָ. And for that reason, we are called Yisroel, a derivative of the word שָׂרִיתָ.

The Gemoro is Chagiga (3a) quotes the possuk in Shir Hashirim (7,2):

מַה יָּפוּ פְעָמַיִךְ בַּנְּעָלִים בַּת נָדִיב (שיר השירים ז,ב)

How beautiful are your steps in shoes, O prince's daughter!

The Gemoro explains the possuk to be a praise of the Jewish people when they are oleh l’regel.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks: but doesn’t the Gemoro in Berachos (54a) prohibit us from entering Har Habayos with our shoes? So how can the Gemoro in Chagiga attribute this possuk which lauds the footsteps of Klal Yisroel - בַּנְּעָלִים (in their shoes) to being oleh l’regel, the one place where we are not allowed to wear shoes!

Imagine the person preparing to be oleh l’regel. He is excited but nervous. He must leave his home and fields for an extended period of time. Everyone will know he is not home. Isn’t that an invitation to burglars?

The possuk is praising the person who ascends to Yerushalayim despite being concerned about leaving his property unattended for a long period while he is away. It is the footsteps on the way up to Yerushalayim that are being praised. Why? Because Hashem loves and cherishes the struggle.

Perhaps that is another connection between our sedra, at the very end of sefer Vayikra, and the upcoming yom tov of Shavuos where we are oleh l’regel. Our sedra places the parsha of arachin straight after the chilling tochacha to teach that the real value of a person is the way in which he responds to a challenge.

And that is why the Gemoro praises the person who ascends to Yerushalayim, somewhat concerned about leaving his property, but rises above his anxiety in service to Hashem. It is the struggle that defines us, and it is the struggle that Hashem cherishes.

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