

“And you will see among its captivity a woman who is beautiful of form, and you will desire her, you may take her to yourself for a wife.” (21:11)

The Torah recognizes that war wreaks havoc on a person’s emotions. The anxiety and breakdown of normal life leaves a person in an unusually depressed state, emotionally fragile and susceptible to the blandishments of the yetzer hara, evil-inclination. Under such conditions, the Jewish soldier might defer to his base desires. Upon seeing a woman among the enemy, he might feel an uncontrollable desire for her. Rather than risk sin that may lead to further spiritual pollution, the Torah provides an outlet for the lustful soldier. There is a process that the female captive must undergo, after which he may marry her. The process is demeaning and is intended to encourage the Jewish soldier to change his feelings towards her. In any event, we see that the Torah extends itself to provide a concession to the Jew who is under duress, because a concession in the present will ultimately save a soul in the future. We must add that only the Torah – or Chazal, with their Divinely inspired knowledge – can undertake such a modification.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, remembers that when he was a student in the Slabodka Yeshivah, Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, z.l., observed in one of his shmuessen, ethical discourses, that the individual, who thinks that when he faces the Heavenly Tribunal he will be able to justify his non-observance of Torah and mitzvos, is utterly wrong. One has only to peruse the beginning of Parashas Ki Seitzei to note the lengths to which the Torah goes to provide for the needs of its devotees, to ensure that they have no excuse for a lack of observance. If Hashem had sensed that it would not be within a person’s ability to fulfill a specific mitzvah, He would not have given it. This idea should imbue us with a strong desire and enthusiasm for kiyum ha’mitzvos, mitzvah observance, for we know that it is within our ability to fulfill the mitzvos.