

Who is the man who built a new house... and who is the man who has planted a vineyard... and who is the man who had betrothed a woman... Let him go and return to his house. (20:5,6,7,8)

The Torah exempts the fellow who has recently built a home, planted a vineyard, or betrothed a young woman from going into battle. These people will not be good soldiers, since their minds are preoccupied with what they have left at home. Interestingly, if someone owns a huge estate, has many orchards, or has a wife and seven children – he does not go home. Why? Does one who has great wealth and familial responsibilities have less on his mind than the poor fellow who has one small home, brand new vineyard, or has just become united with a woman? Apparently, the one who has much does not worry as much. Why?

Horav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zl, explains that one who has amassed great wealth or has a large family is not preoccupied with it. During battle, he will concentrate on what is in front of him. He will fight. On the other hand, one who has just built a house, planted a small vineyard, or has betrothed a woman is finally at the edge of getting something of his own. Such a person cannot stop thinking about his achievement – an achievement that might have eluded him for years. The Torah recognizes the frail mindset of those who have yet to actualize their dreams, who are “almost” there. They will be concerned with only one thing: themselves. Such a person cannot be a soldier.