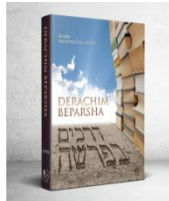


## דרכים בפרשה שופטים

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**מי האיש אשר בנה בית חדש ולא חנכו ילך וישב לביתו פן ימות במלחמה ואיש אחר יחנכו. ומי האיש אשר נטע כרם ולא חללו ילך וישב לביתו פן ימות במלחמה ואיש אחר יחללנו. ומי האיש אשר ארש אשה ולא לקחה ילך וישב לביתו פן ימות במלחמה ואיש אחר יקחנה (כ:ה-ז)**

*Who is the man who has built a new house and has not [yet] inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war, and another man will inaugurate it. And who is the man who has planted a vineyard, and has not [yet] redeemed it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war, and another man will redeem it. And who is the man who has betrothed a woman and has not [yet] taken her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war, and another man will marry her (20:5-7)*

Rashi comments that the housebuilder is exempt because it would be heartbreaking if he were to die in battle and his un-lived-in home would become the property of someone else. The same reasoning would apply to a newly planted vineyard and a newly engaged groom. The Ibn Ezra and Ramban explain on a more practical level that the three men that are mentioned in our *passuk* are exempt from fighting because their minds will be elsewhere and they will not be able to focus on the battle. Instead of thinking of war strategy, their minds will be on their new home, vineyard, or bride.

If we take a closer look at these *halachos*, we note that the Torah exempts a person who builds a home that is as small as 4x4 *amos* and has not yet lived in it from joining the war, because maybe he will die and another man will live in it. Let us contrast this minimum amount to someone who lives in a 14-bedroom home, with a three-car garage and an Olympic sized swimming pool. To go along with his mansion, he also has a real estate portfolio that is the envy of the city. And yet, the Torah obligates him to fight, even if his death results in another man taking over his empire.

Similarly, a person that planted a few grape vines and has not yet reached the fourth year in which he would then be able to go up to Yerushalayim and eat them there for the very first time is exempt. On the other hand, the greatest wine baron with acres and acres of the world's finest grapes, featuring Moscato, Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay etc. is told that he must fight.

Finally, a newly engaged *chassan*, engaged to the very first girl that the shadchan mentions to him is exempt because he worries that someone else will marry her. However, a father of seven children receives no such consideration from the Torah. We do not look at his concern that someone else will marry his wife and raise his family in his place.

Rav Elyashiv *zt"l* (Divrei Agadah) wonders why there should be a difference in these cases, if at the end of the day, the distraction is at least the same if not much greater.

Rav Elyashiv answers that a person who has amassed a great amount of real estate or an owner of many wine estates does not specifically think about each property or vineyard that he owns. His main thoughts in battle will be focused on the war. However, a poor person who has gotten to the point where he is finally ready to move into his very own *daled amos*, a person that is starting out with just a vine or two, or a person who has never been married and has found his other half, cannot stop thinking about what would happen if he would lose his home, his wife, or his grapes.

These people are not fit to fight a war. Their minds will be consumed with visions of their greatest aspirations being crushed should they not return. They have finally reached a moment in their lives that they can see their dreams becoming a reality and now they are faced with the possibility of watching the dreams slip between their fingers and completely shattering.

דרכי דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום - The Torah's ways are pleasant and will even take into account a person's dreams, thus exempting these people from battle. How much more so must we take care not to ever belittle someone's idea or stand in the way of someone's hope.

**מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos,**