



Raising One's Voice

This week I could have written about such mitzvot as returning lost articles, Shatnetz, or Tzizit. But other verses caught my eye in the portion, and though they are related to topics that are a bit more difficult to write about they are very important and unfortunately very relevant. I hope I will do them justice.

In this week's portion we are told the laws of two different cases of inappropriate conduct between a man and a girl who is betrothed to another man. In the first case (22:23-24) the man finds her in the city, whereas in the second case (22:25-27) he finds her in a deserted field. In both cases it says that the man "lies with her – SHACHAV IMA", but in the first case both the man and the girl are punished, whereas in the second case only the man is punished. What is the difference between these two cases and why is the woman treated differently in each case?

Let us look closer at these verses starting from the second case – where the man finds the girl in the field. The verse says (25) "VEHECHEZIK BA,– he grabbed and held her by force ". Here the verse mentions

force on the part of the man as Onkelos translates "YATKEF BA". In the first case, on the other hand, this word relating to force is not mentioned. In this second case the Torah tells us that the woman is not guilty at all – stating that "even if the woman tried to shout, to object, to call for help, since she was in the fields there was no one there to come to her aid" (27).

In the first case, on the other hand, the Torah tells us that the woman chose not to shout. It wasn't a case of abuse, rather in the words of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch – it was conscious adultery (22-27). For that reason she is also punished.

It is true that there are times when a woman who is being attacked may be unable to scream or call for help for example if she has a fright or freeze reaction or her mouth is covered by the perpetrator as Abarbanel suggests, but that is not the case being described in this first scenario.

So why was I interested in these specific verses? One of the things we can learn from them is the importance of a woman shouting for help in order to protect herself, as well as the importance of there being others around who will come to her aid.

I found this fascinating as I just finished a training course to be an instructor for Empowerment Self Defense (ESD). This

very practical method of self-defense is appropriate for all ages and for all types of attacks against women - such as terrorists or thieves. It can also be used against rapes, which, unfortunately, are perpetrated more than 60 percent of the time, by someone known, and usually trusted, by the victim.

One thing we learned in this training is the importance of using one's voice – and especially shouting. The method includes 5 principles: think, yell, run, fight, and tell. Fighting is only one aspect of the method. "Yell" is another and is just as important and even comes before fighting. A woman using her voice may actually save her own life.

Reading this week's portion strengthened my feelings as to the importance of teaching girls and women how to protect themselves.

With this very difficult topic in the news this past week, we are reminded that it is of the utmost importance for our society to invest in education and prevention of such horrible incidents. The Torah teaches us of the importance of women shouting and of having a society of people who would go to help women when needed. We all must ask ourselves if we help create such a society. What more can we each do to improve the situation?

Even in these times of Corona, there are still many Health Ministry approved classes in person or online where women can be trained in self defense (or just basic techniques to protect themselves). We all must also do our part to make sure that

in our circles "if the betrothed girl had screamed out" there would be someone to come to her aid. ■



RECIPE

With Rosh Hashana around the corner I am including a recipe for a simple salad with black eyed peas that can be used as one of the simanim, rubia.

BLACK EYED PEAS AND CORN SALAD

2 cups black eyed peas, cooked and cooled

1 cup corn kernels (fresh or frozen)

1/2 red onion, finely chopped

1/2 red pepper, finely chopped

2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped

1/4 cup olive oil

1/4 cup fresh lemon or lime juice

1/4 teaspoon salt

Rinse, check and cook peas. Remove excess water. Combine all ingredients together. Chill for about an hour and then serve.

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