

Devarim 2005

Re'ey

Be on your guard that are not ensnared (tinnakesh) to follow after them (Deut. 12:30). This verse elicits a most astonishing and uncharacteristic comment by *Rashi*. On the form *tinnakesh*, he states: 'Targum Onkelos derives it from the word *mokesh*, a snare, but I say that he did not pay sufficient attention to its linguistic form...' Considering that Onkelos was the official Aramaic translation, sanctioned by the greatest Talmudic sages of the 1st century, *Rashi*'s temerity to offer such a withering critique is a measure of his own self-confident authority and greatness.

Shoftim

For you are coming to the land which the Lord Thy God has given to you. Do not learn to follow after the abominations of those (indigenous) nations (Deut. 18:9). The physical beauty and uniqueness of 'the land flowing with milk and honey' has to be complemented by a spiritual beauty and a moral uniqueness.

Ki Teitze

And you espy among the captives a woman of beautiful form whom you desire and wish to take to wife... (Deut. 21:11). The Torah legislates here for human passion, but insists that it be channelled into the sacred direction of love and marriage. There was no place in Torah law for the rape and humiliation of captive women, such as has been commonplace in the wake of the conquering armies, and as a form of 'ethnic cleansing,' from antiquity to the present day.

Nitzavim

Therefore choose life that thou mayest live... (Deut. 30:20). There is a conceptual conflict here between this instruction and the plea we will be making in a few days time, when we place the onus on God to 'remember us for life'. It can only be resolved on the assumption that we must first 'choose' – that is, affirm, enhance and sanctify – life in order for God to have something to 'remember' and respond to.