

# INVESTMENT STRATEGY

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

*"Then the officers shall speak to the people saying, 'Who is the man who has built a new house and has not 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 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 not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will marry her.'" (Devarim/Deuteronomy 20:5-7)*

G-d offers three exemptions from military service for extenuating circumstances. One is predicated on the initiation of one of the most profound interpersonal connections, marriage, a relationship that serves as a paradigm for the bond between the Jewish Nation and G-d Himself. The others are due to the unrealized pleasure from material possessions. As intensely different as these rationales appear on the surface, is there a deeper common thread that joins them together? If so, what lesson can be derived from the Torah's decision to connect them?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1) writes extensively of the Divine spark within each person that creates the drive to give to others. He explains that this drive is the underpinning of the need for friendship, for someone experiencing the most intense joy finds it lacking if there is no one with whom to share it, and one of the most punitive forms of incarceration is solitary confinement.

Further, he expounds, that while one motivation for bearing children is acquiring eternity, having offspring who are in essence a continuation of the self, greater still is the motivation to have someone whom one can love and for whom one can care. Thus, it is common that couples who cannot bear children adopt or take in foster children, or have family pets which they virtually treat as children. These all testify to the strength of the need to give that is instilled in our souls.

But, questions Rabbi Dessler, what is the progression: does love inspire giving or does giving inspire love?

We tend to think the former is the reality: because of my love for the other, I give. In truth, declares Rabbi Dessler, I love that into which I invest myself, the child I raise, the animal I care for, the plant I grew, even the inanimate house I built. I love that in which I toiled with my own hands because I am a component of it, as it says in chapter 2 of Tractate Derech Eretz Zuta, "If you desire to cling with love to your friend, toil for his benefit."

This investment, concludes Rabbi Dessler, is not a detraction of one's self.

To the contrary, it is the expansion of self as he is now a part of every person he profoundly touches. This connection is the essence of the relationship we call "love". These are the lessons of the military exemptions. The love that is generated by one's investment of self in a "labor of love" is so magnificent that it can even equal the love between husband and wife, and the love between husband and wife is most profound when it stems from investing in the other.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) 1891-1954; in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, his collected writings and discourses; from England and, later, B'nai Brak, he was one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement.

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