

Sent Away, Not Sold

Parshas Ki Teitzei

OHR HACHAIM • DEVARIM 21:14

For Her Own Sake

The Torah writes “veshilchatah l’nafshah” — send her away “for herself” — right before saying she may not be sold for money. The Ohr HaChaim reads “l’nafshah” as the word that supplies the reason for that prohibition: she must go free for her own sake, not be treated as something to profit from.

He gives two ways to understand exactly what that means. On the practical level, having already benefited from her once, the husband may not benefit from her again by selling her. On a deeper level, he offers a different reading of “lenafshah”: whatever good was drawn out of her through the yefas toar process already belongs to him by now. What remains to be sent away is only the leftover part of her that never changed.

KLI YAKAR • DEVARIM 21:14

Already Written

Rashi notes that the Torah’s wording here — “vehayah im lo chafatzta bah” — is informing the husband in advance that he will ultimately come to hate her. The Kli Yakar asks why the Torah phrases it with “chafatzta” (you desired, past tense) instead of the more natural future “tachpotz” (you will desire).

One explanation he gives: before Hashem, Who sees the outcome in advance, it is as if the matter had already happened long ago — which is why the Torah phrases a future event in the language of an already-settled fact.

FOR THE TABLE

Even at the moment of separation, another person must not become an opportunity for profit.

WORTH ASKING

Both mefarshim build their entire reading on a single unusual word choice — why do you think precise Torah wording can carry that much weight, more than we’d expect from ordinary language?