**Miller’s Musings**וָאֶתְחַנָּן  **פרשת**

**5 Star Holiday Standard**

Entering the Promised Land was the culmination of everything the Jewish people experienced since their servitude in Egypt through their forty year sojourn in the desert.  Yet it did not come without its dangers, especially during the time when they would conquer the land and their spiritual defences would be lowered.  The Rambam tells us that when Moshe informs them that in the land there will be “houses full of good things...and you will eat and be satisfied”, it teaches us that during a war for a mitzvah purpose, the Jewish people were permitted to eat even forbidden foods.  This allowance then appears somewhat incongruous with the next statement which enjoins them to “Beware, lest you forget Hashem!”, surely a different message to what has just been legitimised!

The allowance the Jewish people were given at times of war is just another example of the truth that even given the many obligations placed on us, the Torah understands that we are human beings with imperfections, limitations and drives that may sometimes be beyond us to restrain.  Yet there are still consequences of these momentary acquiescences.  The forbidden food may have been sanctioned at this time but such food has intrinsic negative impact to a person’s neshomo and one’s belief system, and this required extra care to ensure it did not have this long lasting repercussions, hence the continuation with the warning not to forget Hashem.

This is a time when many minds turn to holidays and the freedoms they bring.  People’s standards tend to slip somewhat when they are away from their usual routine, perhaps a distance from their community and in a generally more uninhibited frame of mind.  Whether in this instance Hashem deems it beyond a person’s free will to act differently is of course entirely dependent on the person and the situation in which they find themselves.  This is for each and every person to judge individually.  What one cannot forget however is that even momentary lapses in one’s values can have more wide-ranging effects on oneself and one’s family beyond the holiday itself.  A holiday is of course a time for relaxing, a rest from the pressures of everyday life and hopefully for bonding with one’s family.  It can be of tremendous worth to a person and family’s emotional wellbeing, but it does not provide a carte-blanche for unrestricted behaviour and relinquishing of all our principles.  A holiday is a break from the monotony of life not the meaning of life.

May this Shabbos bring rest and restoration.

לעילוי נשמת לאה בת אברהם