ט' תמוז תשעו July 15, 2016

פרשת בלק

Build fences

We are instructed to haveprotective fences- cautionary rules-for the Torah- סיג לתורה.[[1]](#footnote-2) This is so that we don’t come to transgress and as the Mishna says כדי להרחיק אדם מן העבירה; to distance oneself from sin.[[2]](#footnote-3) A hint to this is found in[[3]](#footnote-4)והגבלת את העם סביב; you shall set boundaries for the people, which is written in the context of Matan Torah.

A wealthy man named R’ Issurel had a big store with all types of silk which he would close on Erev Shabbos at Chatzos. The Yetzer Hara once came to test him in this area in which he appeared in the guise of a big officer. Appearing as such, he entered the store and took lots of the expensive merchandise and measured it. Chatzosarrived while he was in middle of his shopping.However, this didn’t deter the wealthy store owner as he began to close up like he always did. This officer pleaded with him to give him the merchandise but R’ Issurel objected thereby losing abundance of money. Due to this, he was honored with such a holy son- the [[4]](#footnote-5)Rema (1530-1572)![[5]](#footnote-6)

For going beyond the call of duty (having protective fences), one receives reward here as this is above what is required.[[6]](#footnote-7)This is how we can explain what it says when Bilaam[[7]](#footnote-8) was traveling to curse us-במשעל הכרמים גדר מזה וגדר מזה; stood in the path of the vineyards, a fence on this side and a fence on that side.[[8]](#footnote-9)במשעל are the first letters of[[9]](#footnote-10)שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא; the reward for fulfilling a Mitzva is not given in this world, as Bilaam thought he could curse us and our Mitzvos wouldn’t protect since there is no reward for it in this world. This was a mistake, as the Pasukcontinues, becauseגדר מזה וגדר מזה- since we made fences to avoid sin thereby going beyond the call of duty, we are rewarded in this world as well.

Hot or cold

The Gemararelates thatהכל בידי שמים חוץ מצינים ופחים; any misfortune that befalls a person is on account of a heavenly decree except for illness brought upon by exposure to cold and heat.[[10]](#footnote-11)This seems problematic since elsewhere the Gemara remarks that הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים; everything is in the hands of Heaven except for יראת שמים; G-d fearing?[[11]](#footnote-12)In truth, these two Gemaras complement each other asצינים ופחים refers to performing Avodas Hashem with התלהבות; passion or קרירות; coldness.[[12]](#footnote-13)So יראת שמים (Avodas Hashem) is in our hands and we can perform it with fire or with coldness![[13]](#footnote-14)

When one gets older, he gets weaker, which can cause him to have less התלהבות.This can be used for good as he can have קרירותin the realm of that which is the opposite of Avodas Hashem. For example, he doesn’t let the fire of anger make an argument flare out of control. Or, he doesn’t have to run to his food with such zeal.

On the other hand, when one is young, he has the חמימות, התלהבות. This can also be used in a negative way if this ability is used for one’s passions and desires.

As with all situations one should take that which is at hand and utilize it for Avodas Hashem. In this case, one should use the weakness of old age to counter the evil inclination and use the fire of his youthto come closer to Hashem.

In truth, authentic התלהבותcan be had even by one who is older and קרירותcan be had by one who is younger and both can be used in a positive way. This is what lies in the phrase **נער** הייתי גם **זקנתי**.[[14]](#footnote-15)In this way we can grasp והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם as he should use these traits- the trait of coldness represented by אבות and the fire of youth symbolized by בנים- for Avodas Hashem.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Although one may be weak at an old age, according to his ability, he can have fire in his Avodas Hashem. This fire can be contained within one’s mind and heart where he has a burning yearning desire to come close to Hashem.

When the BeisMidrash of the SefasEmes burned down, he inquired what the source of the fire was. When he was told it was ignited by a cigarette in the attic, he commented that if such a small fire can lead to much damage, imagine what a small fire of Torah and Mitzvoscan cause.

In the year 1997, aman named Lenny gave a call to the rabbi of a Shul in Dallas, Texas expressing to him that he wanted to make a donation to his shul. When Lenny was asked why he wanted to donate money to a shul that he had no affiliation with, he explained that he just returned from a tour in Israel. He said in Jerusalem, ‘I was amazed by the intensity of a man dressed in a long black frock with ringlets of hair by his ears (a Chassid) whom I saw praying at the western wall- the Kosel.I was so moved by the depth of fervor- התלהבות- he displayed that I wanted to do something for him. Feeling uncomfortable to approach him, I decided when I return to Dallas, I’ll find a temple where this man would be likely to pray atand make a contribution in his merit. When I got home I went to the Kosher bakery where the owner told me that a Chasid like that would daven in this type of shul. Thus, I gave money to your shul.’ As his connection with the rabbi grew he gave more money and raised even more from his friends. When Lenny passed away his mother gave tens of thousands of dollars in his memory. These far reaching consequences were ignited by being inspired with someone davening withהתלהבות. May we all inspire and be inspired through התלהבות.

The day to elevate

Did you ever wonder why we have a שלום זכר[[16]](#footnote-17) on Shabbos?

One idea of Shabbos is to elevate physicality. Hence, the Gemara tells us that on Shabbosבעינן נמי לכם (physicality).[[17]](#footnote-18)This explains why it is referred to as שבת קודשsince throughשבת we make even the physicality קודש. This is what is meant in[[18]](#footnote-19)קודש היא לכם as we make the לכם; physicality-holy. Is it any surprise that rearranging the letters ofשבת, we get the word תשב since תשובה means returning all to Hashem. Is it any wonder that שבת are the first letters of **ש**בת בו תשוב.

Yaakov symbolizes this idea. He is one who elevates physicality to Kedushaand as it says קדוש יעקב.[[19]](#footnote-20)We see this in Yaakov’s life as he married 4 wives, had 12 Shevatim as well as going back for the פכים קטנים; the small jugs.[[20]](#footnote-21)

Yaakov represents the idea of elevating that which is permitted to us. This explains why Maariv- which Yaakov instituted- is a רשות; optional,as Yaakov elevates that which isרשות- permitted.

The phraseבכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך corresponds to the Avos.[[21]](#footnote-22)בכל מאדךlines up with Yaakov. The term מאדךis related to מדה; measure- as the Mishna[[22]](#footnote-23) tells us- since we elevate that which is permitted to us when we do it in the right measure- whether eating, sleeping and the like. יעקב is rooted in עקב- as it says[[23]](#footnote-24)וידו...בעקב עשו- which is symbolic of the seemingly small insignificant things[[24]](#footnote-25) as he elevates even that. Hence, עקב are the initials of קדש עצמך במותר; sanctify that which is permitted, says the Nesivos Shalom.[[25]](#footnote-26)Is it any surprise that Chazal connect Yaakov to Shabbos as the Gemara learns out fromאז תתענג...נחלת **יעקב**וגו'[[26]](#footnote-27)that כל המענג...בלי מצרים; whoever delights in Shabbos is granted a boundless heritage. Furthermore, it is measure for measure,because since he elevates that which is רשות, he receives a boundless heritage.We all come from Yaakov as we are called BneiYisrael and thus have this trait in our genes.

In light of this we can grasp why we have a שלום זכר on Shabbos.Once the child has emerged from the mother's womb into this physical world, and the Torah he learned was removed from him, we console him by celebrating with physical food, channeling it toward Hashem. This shows the childthat the physical can be channeled to קדושה; holiness, to spirituality.[[27]](#footnote-28)The שלום זכר represents this idea of elevating the physical, and therefore it is most fitting for it to take place on Shabbos.

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לרפואה שלמה איסר יהודה בן טילה יוכבד

1. Avos 1:1. An example of this is that the Rabbanan forbade the handling of certain utensils on Shabbos- known as Muktza- since maybe one will use them to perform work forbidden by the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Brachos 2a. For this reason, regarding Shema in the evening one has until midnight to say it, although biblically one has until dawn. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Shemos 19:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Some of the Rema’s students were the Levush, the Sma, the Bach and the Masas Binyamin- the father of the Shela. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. TaamaiMinhagim, pg 128, s.v. וצריך. In 1551-2 the mother of the Rema as well as his 20 year old wife and maternal grandmother died. To perpetuate their memory, the Rema’s father built a shul in Krakow, Poland, which came to be known as the Rema’s shul. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See Maharsha, Sota 14a, s.v. וא"ל [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Tangentially, the Gemara (Sota 11a) tells us that 3 people were involved in offering counsel to Paroh. One of them was בלעם. Based on this, the Pe’erAhron points out that the initials of **מ**סים**ל**מען **ע**נתו **ב**סבלתם; they would appoint taskmasters over it in order to afflict it with their burdens, are בלעם. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Bamidbar 22:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Kiddushin 39b [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Kesubos 30a [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Tosafos, ibid, s.v. הכל.Brachos 33b [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Amalek are the ones who try to cool our התלהבות; fire of Avodas Hashem. This is hinted to in אשר קרך בדרך (Devarim 25:18), which is stated by Amalek, as קרךis rooted in קר; cool off. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Approximately 35 years ago, a newcomer (Baal Teshuva)to Judaism who wasn’t sure how to daven was in Beis Midrash Elyon in Monsey while they were davening with tremendous fire as he described it. A child present there asked him why are you not davening, to which he replied I don’t feel like it. The child returned the reply with-‘who said Hashem wants your Tefilos only when you feel like it.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Tehillim37:25. Tosafos explains (Shabbos 88a, s.v. כפה) that Hashem forced us to accept the Torah although we already said ...נעשה ונשמע(Shemos 24:7) since we may have changed our minds upon seeing the tremendous fire that accompanied the Revelation. R’ Shmuel Birnbaum asked so why didn’t Hashem give the Torah without the fire? He answered that Torah without fire- התלהבות- isn’t Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Malachi 3:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See YorehDeah, 265:12. The title שלום זכר comes from the Gemara (Nida 31b) that statesבא **זכר** לעולם בא **שלום**בעולם. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Pesachim 68b.This is learned from וקראת...ענג(Yeshaya 58:13). It therefore comes as no surprise that ענגforms the initials of**ע**דון **נ**שמה **ג**וף [pleasure] (Siduro Shel Shabbos, ח"א, 5:3:7). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. In the Zemerברוך א-ל עליון. See Shemos 31:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Yeshaya 29:23. The Nesivos Shalom (Vayechi, s.v. כיון) informs us that Yosef represents Kedusha from that which is forbidden as we see with the wife of Potifar, whereas Yaakov symbolizes Kedushaeven from that which is permitted (see footnote 17). In this way we can explain the first Rashi in Ki Seitzei(21:10) which says that the section there is speaking of a מלחמת הרשות; optional war. This can mean that כי תצא למלחמה is referring to the war with the Yetzer Hara in the area of that which is a רשות, permitted to you. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Breishis 32:25, Rashi. The first 3 Brachos of ShemonaEsrei correspond to the 3 Avos. Consequently, Yaakov matches up with אתה קדוש. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Devarim 6:5. בכל לבבך; with all your heart, parallels Avraham who was completely dedicated to Hashem.בכל נפשך; with all your soul, matches up with Yitzchak who was ready to give up his life at the עקידה.בכל מאדך correlates with Yaakov as is depicted in him going back for the פכים קטנים. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Brachos 54a [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Breishis 25:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. See Devarim 7:12, Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Vayechi, s.v. כיון.See Yevamos 20a for the phrasing קדש עצמך במותר. There is that which is forbidden to a Jew as well as that which is permitted in which one still must improve himself in. For example, it is forbidden to eat non-kosher meat. However, even with kosher meat one should eat the proper amount. This is just as we sayin TefilasZaka-מה שחטאנו בתענוגי עולם הזה; that which we sinned through pleasure of this world. This applies to everything such as sleeping, talking and so on. This is sanctifying oneself on that which is permitted to him (seeRamban, Vayikra 19:2, see Tanya chapter 6, 27). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Shabbos 118.Yeshaya 58:14. TheBeis Yosef (Orach Chaim 242, s.v. גרסינן) quotes the מהר"י אבוהבthat says it is measure for measure in that since he spends funds for Shabbos without restraint he is granted an inheritance without restriction. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. The Drisha (YorehDeah 264, s.v.מי)tells us that the idea of a שלום זכרis that it is a condolence visit, since the newborn mourns over the Torah he forgot upon his birth. This is also the reason why we eat chickpeas at a שלום זכר, as it is a food eaten by mourners (Matamim, pg 38). For this reason, Bris Mila is on the 8th day as it is after the 7 days of mourning. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)