



THE SECURITY FENCE NEEDS REINFORCING *Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

Borders are placed for a reason. They keep things in place and create some sense of safety. For many years western society had those basic borders which kept things in a semblance of order. When communities moved away from what was considered right and proper, chaos ensued, wreaking havoc for all. In the last few decades, we have all witnessed the steady erosion of moral borders. That which was always considered beyond the pale has now been sanctioned and given support.

My birthplace, the United States of America, has perhaps been guilty of many infractions in its history, but at its core there was a conservative take on life that kept religion at the centre of public life. There was always a bedrock belief in G-d, something every child pledged allegiance to on a daily basis in school. Please understand, I was of draft age during the Vietnam War, and heard all the chanting from the youth of our day that was challenging the status quo of the leadership of that time. But even then, in the sixties, certain lines were not crossed; everyone instinctively knew what would happen if they were. Despite the chattering of liberal media gurus, middle America, the bedrock of its greatness, had an instinctive sense of right and wrong.

Well, now we are living on another planet, one in which all borders are being eradicated and the Tower of Babel is being rebuilt. What has any of this to do with us, you may ask. We are frum; we are growing; we live in our little islands and keep our young well away from the ruinous rubbish of the outside world. The truth is a bit more nuanced though, because the rubbish seeps in, and we become susceptible to what goes on. We lose sight of our role as a light unto the nations. The question is: how can this be happening? In fact, is it?

The Torah teaches us vital lessons when discussing the cities of refuge, the places designated for unintentional murderers to reside in until the death of the Kohen Gadol. Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu to designate three of the six cities of refuge on the side of the Jordan. Rashi, quoting Chazal, points out that the population there was far smaller than in the land of Israel, therefore it is difficult to understand why so many cities of refuge were placed there. He

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לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
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answers that there were many murderers in that area and accordingly there was a need for a proportionally greater number of cities of refuge.

The commentaries suggest that this answer does not seem to make sense because it states that there were more deliberate murderers, yet such criminals did not go to the cities of refuge, only those who killed through negligence!

The Maharal answers that because there were so many deliberate murders in their vicinity those living there became less sensitive to the value of life in general. Consequently, they were less careful to avoid harming others during potentially dangerous activities, and ultimately more accidental deaths occurred.

The Maharal's explanation brings to light an important principle with regard to how we relate to the more heinous sins in the Torah. A person may think that sins such as murder and idol worship are of no relevance to him because he has no yetzer hara in those areas. Whilst this may be true, we learn from the Maharal that even a person who has no inclination to murder may be subject to a slight lack of sensitivity to the seriousness of such a sin, and as a result he will be slightly less careful when engaged in potentially dangerous activities.

In this way we see that when the Torah commands a person not to kill it is insufficient to merely not kill others. It is also imperative that he should develop such a high level of sensitivity to the value of life that it will permeate all areas that are related to it.

The same is true in all areas of existence. Much that we find written about in the Torah, that which we may see as major areas of concern, are only the tip of the iceberg. We may very well stay away from those "Biggies" but become ever vaguer to the vast sensitivities that lay behind them. Slowly, thoughts creep into the minds of our brethren that would have never been deemed proper before. Borders that protected us from the chaos of the material world become corroded and ever hazier.

Without working constantly on our values and beliefs, we can slip into the quagmire that is certainly overcoming so much of the world. I feel that we need to have clear discussions about such matters, explaining what it is to be a Yid fully and not just for appearances. The olam need to be able to discuss things without fear of being put down. In this way each family can create the strong borders they need to safeguard their lives. There is no one size fits all, not when each mind thinks in its own unique way.

Bamidbar, 27:15-16 states: "Moshe spoke to Hashem saying, May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly" ... explains Rashi: "G-d of the spirits" For what [reason] was this said? He [Moshe] said before Him, Master of the Universe, it is revealed before You the nature of each person and that they are not similar to each other - appoint a leader who can bear each person according to his nature."

We are a weak generation and the world around us has chipped away at our abilities to think in a spiritual way. We therefore must personalise the way in which we give each neshoma chizuk. If ever there was a need it is now. The need to awaken the warmth of every neshoma, draw them close so that they somehow withstand the oceans that are lapping about our ankles. Everyone in a position of trust must know this: there are huge dangers, and the entire world is losing its way.

On Tisha B'Av-we bewail the loss of the Beis Hamikdosh, and the fact that the Golus is driving us further away from our connection with Hashem. We must also undertake positive action to strengthen ourselves with Torah truth. We are all vulnerable, and we all need chizuk. Each one of us needs a personal guide who will truly understand us. In this way we will grow in our sensitivity to what kedusha is in this life, and hopefully, we will remain standing strong despite the winds that buffet our souls.