

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf

7 Sivan 5767

Yevamos Daf 21

May 24, 2007

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Highlights

The Gemora presents a dispute between Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eliezer regarding a kohen gadol, who illegally performs a *yibum* with his brother's wife. One of them maintains that this does not exempt the co-wife from *yibum* or *chalitzah* and the other one holds that the co-wife is released from her bond to the *yavam*.

The Gemora explains the basis for their disagreement: They are not arguing regarding a case where there was a *nisuin* because in that case the *yevamah* is forbidden to him on account of a positive and a negative commandment; the positive commandment of *yibum* cannot override the two prohibitions and the co-wife will still be subject to either *yibum* or *chalitzah*.

The dispute is only in a case where the widow fell to *yibum* from a state of *erusin* (*where there is only a negative prohibition*). One opinion maintains that the positive commandment of *yibum* overrides the negative prohibition of the kohen gadol taking the widow and the co-wife will not be exempt from *yibum* and *chalitzah*. The other opinion holds that the positive commandment of *yibum* does not override this prohibition because there exists the possibility of *chalitzah* (*Rish Lakish stated above that a positive commandment overrides a prohibition*

only if there is no other alternative) and therefore the co-wife is still subject to either *yibum* or *chalitzah*.

The Gemora cites a braisa which states that a *yavam* who perform a *yibum* with a *yevamah* that he is prohibited by a negative commandment has indeed acquired her as a wife. This indicates that the *mitzvah* of *yibum* was performed and the co-wife will be released from her bond to the *yavam*. This refutes the opinion mentioned above.

The Gemora asks: This braisa should also serve as a refutation of the opinion of Rish Lakish. Rish Lakish had stated that that a positive commandment overrides a prohibition only if there is no other alternative and this braisa states that the *mitzvah* of *yibum* overrides a negative prohibition even though there is an option of *chalitzah*?

The Gemora answers: *Chalitzah* is not considered a valid option because *chalitzah* is not regarded as a *mitzvah* in the place of *yibum*. (20b – 21a)

The Mishna had stated: If her prohibition is because of *mitzvah* or because of sanctity, she

would require *chalitzah* but she is not taken for *yibum*. The Mishna explained the term “*mitzvah* prohibition” to be referring to secondary *arayos* (*illicit relations*), women who are Rabbinically forbidden.

Rava cites a Scriptural verse indicating that secondary *arayos* are somewhat compared to the Biblical *arayos*. (21a)

Rabbi Levi said: The punishment one would receive for false measures is more severe than the punishment for *arayos*.

The Gemora explains: One who violates the prohibition of using false measures cannot manage a full repentance because he doesn't know the amount which he stole and he is uncertain as to his victim's identities. (21a)

Rav Yehudah cites another verse: It is written [Koheles 12:9]: *And besides being wise, Koheles (Shlomo Hamelech) also taught knowledge to the people; and he made handles and sought out and arranged many proverbs.* Ula said in the name of Rabbi Elozar: Prior to Shlomo, the Torah was similar to a basket without handles; until Shlomo came and made handles for it (*issuing decrees, such as secondary arayos, which serve as a safeguard to the Torah*).

Rabbi Oshaya cites another verse: It is written [Mishlei 4:15]: *Reject it; do not pass on it; veer away from it and pass on. (The word 'peroehu' can mean "grow it," thus intimating that we can enlarge the prohibitions of the Torah by issuing Rabbinical decrees in order to protect the Torah's prohibitions.)*

Rav Ashi attempt to explain Rabbi Oshaya's statement with a parable: One who is guarding an orchard; if he stands on the outside, the entire orchard is protected, but if he stands inside,

whatever is in front of him is protected, but the area in back of him is not protected.

The Gemora states: Rav Ashi's analogy is incorrect. Regarding the orchard, if the guard positions himself on the inside, at least part of the orchard is protected; however, without the Rabbinically instituted *arayos*, one can easily violate a Biblically forbidden woman herself. (21a)

Rav Kahana provides an alternative source: It is written [Vayikra 18:30]: *You shall safeguard my charge.* The Torah is stating that we should safeguard the *arayos* prohibitions by instituting secondary *arayos*.

Abaye asked Rav Yosef: Accordingly, shouldn't the secondary *arayos* be regarded as a Biblical prohibition (*the verse states so explicitly*)?

Rav Kahana answered: It is actually Rabbinic and the verse is only used as support for the Rabbi's decrees. (21a)

The Gemora cites a braisa: What are the secondary *arayos*? His mother's mother, his father's mother, his father's father's wife, his mother's father's wife, the wife of his father's maternal brother, the wife of his mother's paternal brother, the daughter-in-law of his son and the daughter-in-law of his daughter.

The braisa lists relationships that are permitted: The wife of his father-in-law and the wife of his step-son but he is forbidden to marry the daughter of his step-son. His step-son is permitted to marry his step-father's wife and his step-father's daughter. The wife of his step-son may say to him, “I am permitted to you, and my daughter is forbidden to you.” (21a)

Rav said: There are four women (*from the secondary arayos*) that the prohibitions are

restricted to them only (*only they themselves are forbidden but not their descendants or ancestors in the descending or ascending line*).

Rav lists three of them: The wife of a mother's paternal brother, the wife of a father's maternal brother, and one's daughter-in-law. Zeiri adds the fourth: The wife of his mother's father.

The Gemora asks: Why is a daughter-in-law included in this listing; she is a Biblical *ervah*?

The Gemora answers: The braisa is referring to one's daughter's daughter-in-law. (21a – 21b)

The Gemora inquires: What is the law regarding the wife of his mother's maternal brother?

The Gemora answers: When Rav Yehudah bar Shila came to Bavel, he reported the following rule from Eretz Yisroel: Whenever a female is a Biblical *ervah*, the Rabbis decreed regarding the wife of a male in the same degree of relationship (*as the female*) as a secondary *ervah*.

Rava interrupts: Can this be a general rule; there are many examples that indicate otherwise? One's mother-in-law is a Biblical *ervah* and yet the wife of his father-in-law is permitted?

The Gemora states that Rav Yehudah bar Shila's rule is coming to include the case of the wife of his mother's maternal brother. Since the Torah prohibits the mother's maternal sister, the Rabbis decreed regarding the parallel male relation, which is the wife of the mother's brother.

The Gemora asks: What is the difference between the cases? (*Why is the wife of his mother's maternal brother prohibited based on the parallel by the male and the wife of his father-in-law is permitted even though the*

parallel case i.e., his mother-in-law is forbidden to him?)

The Gemora answers: The wife of his mother's maternal brother became his relative through one act of betrothal and the Rabbis therefore ruled stringently; the wife of his father-in-law is permitted because that relationship came about only through two acts of betrothal (*his own marriage and his father-in-law's new marriage*). (21b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Rabbis Safeguard Against Assimilation, As It Leads To Inter-marriage

By Rabbi Frand

The last pasuk [verse] of Parshas Achrei Mos states: "You shall safeguard My charge that these abominable traditions that were done before you not be done, and not make yourselves impure through them. I am Hashem, your G-d." [Vayikra 18:30]. The Talmud derives the idea of making a fence around the Torah from this exhortation to "safeguard" the commandments (Mishmeres l'mishmarti) [Moed Katan 5a; Yevamos 21a].

If people would only observe the strict Biblical commandments and not observe the Rabbinical safeguards that were added later, we would not recognize what we now call "observant" Judaism. Shabbos observance is a totally different experience because of the Rabbinical enactments that "safeguard" the basic prohibitions of labor. The scope of virtually every area of halachic restriction that we practice has been greatly expanded by virtue of the principle of "make a safeguard for My charge."

Sometimes one could question the extent of "Rabbinical fences" and wonder whether the rabbis didn't go "too far." We look at some "D'Rabanans" and say, "this is a little too far fetched; we'd never make a mistake over here." But we need to understand that the Rabbis were extremely wise, and

knew exactly what they were doing. Their basic intent many times was not so much concern with stopping a specific violation, as with creating a certain atmosphere. They were interested in establishing a pervasive attitude.

I recently taught my Yeshiva class about the laws of consuming food prepared by non-Jews, which are in the Talmud, in Tractate Avodah Zarah. There are prohibitions against eating food prepared (under certain circumstances) by a non-Jew; of drinking wine that is so much as touched (under certain circumstances) by a non-Jew. The rationale behind all of these Rabbinic prohibitions is "lest we come to intermarry with them" (mi'shum chasnus).

One can ask, if the food only contains Kosher ingredients and I take it into the confines of my own home, why should the fact that it happened to have been cooked by a non-Jew be any cause for concern that I might come to marry a non-Jewish woman? Isn't that far-fetched?

The Rabbis were not worried that if someone ate something cooked by a non-Jew, they would immediately go out and marry that person. Rather, they were interested in creating an atmosphere that shouts to us "we've got to remain separate." Once we start breaking down the little things and start tampering with the atmosphere, we are quickly left with what we have today in the United States of America: over fifty percent intermarriage. We no longer have an atmosphere of separation.

The following is excerpted from a column by the rabbi of a Reform congregation in Miami, Florida:

"We think that intermarriage leads to assimilation, but it is the other way around. We marry people like ourselves. The average middle-class Jew is as different from the average middle class Gentile as your average Hutu is different from your average Tutsi. I know Rabbis aren't supposed to say things like this. We are supposed to fight assimilation tooth and nail. But to be honest I am about as assimilated as you can get. Put me in a lineup of the average middle class goy [sic] and the only way you could tell us apart is to play a Jackie Mason tape and see

who laughs. The truth is our kids don't intermarry. They marry people just like themselves. People who eat stone crabs marry people who eat stone crabs."

The rabbi has it exactly right. People are not intermarrying. They are marrying people exactly like themselves. The reason why a strictly religious person would not contemplate marrying a non-Jew (or vice-versa) is because they are so different. Those who follow the Rabbi's safeguards live in an environment nearly as different from that of the average middle class American non-Jew, as either of those environments are different from that of the average Tutsi. The cross-cultural divide is too great. The groups are too different from each other, so they do not intermarry. It would be like marrying someone from a different planet. But if someone eats like them and talks like them and dresses like them, then it is not intermarriage at all. It is marrying within one's own kind.

He wrote further: "As far as religion goes they both have the same fake sense of spirituality. They both believe in a G-d without being able to define either belief or G-d. They both hold goodness above theology and righteousness above tradition. Religion does not matter to most of our kids. We tried to make it matter and we failed. They don't intermarry. They marry the same kind."

This all started because of an attitude that said, "so what if I go ahead and eat food cooked by non-Jews? So what if I drink a cup of wine with them? It's kosher food! It's kosher wine!" Once one breaks down the "safeguard of My charge" then anything can happen.

Therefore, when we see Rabbinic decrees that sometimes strike us as being far-fetched or even absurd -- we need to step back and acknowledge that the Rabbis knew exactly what they were talking about. They wished to create an attitude and an atmosphere, as the Torah instructs: "Make a safeguard for My charge."

Those who mock the concept of making a safeguard for the Biblical laws should go out and look at what is happening in the world. The alternative is all too

readily present for us to painfully witness. People who eat stone crabs marry people who eat stone crabs.

<http://wap.torah.org/learning/ravfrand/5764/achareimos.html>

Fences of Holiness

By Rabbi Zev Leff

Do not imitate the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and do not imitate the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you, and do not follow their traditions (Vayikra 18:3).

The common theme running through Acharei Mos, Kedoshim and Emor is the kedushah (holiness) of Klal Yisroel and the need for its preservation and protection. In Acharei Mos, we are enjoined not to behave in the depraved manner of the Egyptians and Canaanites (Vayikra 18:3). The question is asked: Why did the Torah command us only with respect to the extreme depravity of the Egyptians and Canaanites? Part of the answer lies in the verse that concludes this parashah and sums it up: "And you shall guard My observances" (Vayikra 18:30). Chazal (Yevamos 21a) derive from this verse the need to make fences around the Torah.

Those fences include general rabbinic decrees designed to distance one from transgressing Torah law and the specific protective measures each individual must implement in his own life to protect himself in areas of personal vulnerability. The Torah is not merely exhorting us not to lead immorally depraved lives, but warning us that if we do not implement safety measures to prevent us from such depravity, we will sink to the lowest level, that of the Canaanites and Egyptians.

Often we hear those who do not understand the true nature of rabbinic legislation complain that the Rabbis made observance much more difficult, complicating our lives with extra prohibitions and restrictions. The following analogy demonstrates the fallacy of this argument. A group of people are situated on a mountaintop which ends in a sheer cliff and a drop of several thousand feet. One civic-

minded member of the group erects on his own initiative a safety fence to prevent anyone from venturing too close to the edge of the cliff and falling off inadvertently. Would anyone complain that the fence limited his freedom of movement by making it less likely that he plummet off the mountain to his death?

One who appreciates the seriousness of transgressing a Torah law - the devastating effects of such transgressions on one's neshamah, one's eternal life and the world in general - surely feels more secure knowing that safety fences have been erected to make it more difficult for him to inadvertently transgress.

Thus, the first function of rabbinic "fences" is to prevent one from transgressing Torah prohibitions inadvertently. For instance, the prohibition on handling certain objects associated with prohibited activities on Shabbos. The danger of inadvertently striking a match on Shabbos is drastically reduced if one never touches matches. Similarly, the rabbinic prohibition on trapping any animal on Shabbos reduces the chance of confusing animals that we are permitted to capture and those which we may not according to Torah law.

Nevertheless, there are rabbinic prohibitions that seem excessively far-fetched as protective enactments. Sometimes this is because we lack Chazal's sensitivity to the potency of forces that may drive one to sin.

A congregant once asked me about allowing a sick old uncle to stay in an apartment usually occupied by his two teenage daughters. When I told him that his daughters could not remain there alone with their great uncle due to the prohibition of yichud (members of the opposite sex being alone together), he complained at the seeming absurdity of worrying in this case.

I was reminded of a story involving Rabbi Elya Lopian. A young bachur sought his permission to attend a relative's wedding. Reb Elya inquired if the women would be dressed modestly. The bachur replied that there would be non-religious people

there, but, Baruch Hashem, he had reached a level where immodest dress no longer made an impression. Reb Elya gave him permission to attend the wedding, but only after he contacted one of Reb Elya's friends. The young man took the phone number and returned a few hours later to tell Reb Elya that he must have made a mistake because the number was a doctor's office.

"No," Reb Elya told him, "there was no mistake. I am a man in my late eighties, blind in one eye, and these things still affect me, but if they don't affect you, then I fear something is physically wrong with you and would like you to go see a doctor."

Hashem created us with extremely strong and potent physical desires, all of them intended to be used for important and holy purposes. But if not channeled properly, these desires can lead to the greatest impurity and defilement. Recognizing how potent these drives are, necessitates extreme caution and strong protective measures. Complaining of the stringency of Chazal's protections is like complaining about the protective lead-lined clothing one wears in a nuclear plant. If one understands how dangerous the radioactivity-ity is, such protective measures are not viewed as excessive.

Chazal had a much surer sense than we of the power of these natural desires. I doubt there is any communal rabbi who does not know from his personal experience of people who were confident of their ability to restrain themselves without observing rabbinic- proscriptions and whose confidence proved badly misplaced.'

Other times, rabbinic rules work indirectly by instilling attitudes that reduce temptations to sin. The Rabbis, for instance, prohibited drinking wine touched by a non-Jew or eating food cooked by a non-Jew as a fence against intermarriage. On the surface, it seems ludicrous that drinking wine in the confines of one's home that has been touched by a non-Jew, or eating food cooked by a gentile and bought in a store could in any way make it more likely that one would marry a gentile.

That response, however, fails to comprehend the purpose of the rabbinic enactment, which is not designed to protect one against intermarriage with any particular non-Jew, but rather to create an all-pervasive attitude that is in itself a protective measure. The prohibition against eating food cooked by non-Jews and from drinking wine touched by non-Jews has effectively created an attitude of an absolute chasm between Jew and non-Jew. The mere knowledge that the food cooked by a non-Jew is forbidden engenders a feeling of separateness that makes the thought of intermarriage even more remote.

Similarly, the rabbinic strictures regarding chametz on Pesach have created a mind-set which makes it extremely unlikely that we will have any contact with chametz, though it is not something from which we naturally separate ourselves.

There is yet another aspect to rabbinic legislation. The Torah commands us to be a nation of priests, a holy nation. An aura of holiness must surround us, not just an absence of external sin. True, being alone with the old sick uncle may not lead to immorality, but allowing a situation where immorality is even remotely possible is not holiness. Holiness demands removing oneself totally from any taint of anything that can be associated with immodesty. Rabbinic fences enclose us in an environment that reflects holiness and cordons off all that opens into unhappiness.

Thus, the observance of Rabbinic prohibitions reflects our holiness even more than observance of Torah prohibitions. Rabbeinu Yonah (to Pirkei Avos 1:1) writes:

It is very great and praiseworthy to make a fence to the Torah's mitzvos so that one who fears and respects God's word will not stumble into transgressing the mitzvah. One who observes the rabbinic laws that form the fences around the Torah shows more fear of God than one who fulfills the mitzvah itself. Performance of the mitzvah does not imply fear and respect as much as observance of the fences by one who is careful not to even come close to inadvertent transgression.

Thus rabbinic fences, besides protecting us from inadvertent transgressions, create an attitude of *yiras shamayim* and an environment of kedushah that enhances the performance of each and every mitzvah.

http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/parsha/leff/archives/ach_kdsh.htm

A Fence Around the Torah – The Key to *Yiras Shamayim*

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

“*Asu syag laTorah* – make a fence as a safeguard around the Torah laws” is the instruction given to us by the *Anshei Keneset Hagedolah* (*Avos* 1:1). *Chazal* (*Yevamos* 21a) derive this obligation to protect the *mitzvos* by enacting rabbinic decrees from the last *passuk* in *Parshas Achrei Mos* (*Vayikra* 18:30), “*ushmartem es mishmarti*”. While *gezeiros d’rabanan* are found in all areas of *halacha*, a unique status was assigned to the safeguards protecting prohibitions of *gilui arayos* (prohibited relationships). We are taught (*Avos D’rabbi Nosson* 2:1) that the Torah itself enacted safeguards to protect us from violating the prohibitions of *arayos*. All physical contact is prohibited by the Torah itself. These prohibitions are to be a fence to protect us from committing actual *gilui arayos*.

Chazal extol the value of *sayagim* around *mitzvos*. Shlomo *Hamelech* is praised by Hashem for instituting *gezeiros* in the realm of carrying on Shabbos. *Chazal* (*Eruvin* 21b) consider this to be one of the greatest achievements of Shlomo *Hamelech*. Why are *gezeiros drabanan* so critical? Why is Shlomo *Hamelech* praised so lavishly for this *gezeira* that it even overshadows his other accomplishments, such as building the *beis hamikdash*?

The Ramban (*Shemos* 20:8) comments that all the negative commandments of the Torah are rooted in *yiras Hashem*. In contrast to the positive commandments which serve to express our *ahavas Hashem*, one expresses one’s fear and awe of Hashem by refraining from what He prohibits.

In the realm of positive *mitzvos* one can express one’s *ahavas Hashem* to different degrees. One who merely fulfills *mitzvos* in the basic form without embellishing on the beauty of their performance has only attained a certain level of *ahavas Hashem*. Performance of a *mitzvah* in the most beautiful way possible clearly demonstrates, and serves as a tool to enable us to grow in, our *ahavas Hashem*.

In the realm of *mitzvas lo taase* it is more difficult to differentiate between different levels of *yiras Hashem*. Isn’t *yiras Hashem* exhausted by simply refraining from *issurim*? Where is there room for growth in abstaining from *aveiros*? Perhaps the key to growth in *yiras Hashem* can be found in the requirement of “*asu syag laTorah*”. A person who not only refrains from prohibitions, but also creates safeguards that **distance** him from violating the word of Hashem demonstrates his appreciation for *yiras Hashem*. One who does not have such safeguards, even if he technically does not violate any prohibition, clearly is lacking in *yiras Hashem*.

There are two distinct aspects of *yiras Hashem*. The elementary level is *yiras haonesh* – fear of punishment. The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuva* emphasizes that everyone must begin with this basic level of fear. Hopefully, one’s *yiras Hashem* will mature and reach the level of *yiras haromemus* – awe for the majesty of Hashem. We allude to these two levels of *yiras Hashem* in the *tefillah* for *mevarchim hachodesh*. We ask Hashem for many things during this *tefillah*. The only request that we repeat is our desire for a life full of *yiras Hashem*. Why do we repeat? Apparently we are asking for two distinct types of *yiras Hashem*. First we request *yiras shamayim v’yiras cheit*. *Yiras cheit* is the basic fear that *cheit* carries with it a punishment. When we beseech Hashem for *yiras shamayim v’yiras cheit* we are requesting that we refrain from *cheit* because of *yiras haonesh*. We then progress to requesting *ahavas Torah v’yiras shamayim*. This is a very different type of *yiras shamayim*. This is a *yirah* that stems from an appreciation of the greatness of Hashem. Just as *ahavas Torah* emanates from an appreciation of the beauty of Torah, so too this *yiras shamayim* of *yiras haromemus* comes from a

realization of the absolute awesome power of Hashem.

Asu syag laTorah is the mechanism to demonstrate our *yiras* Hashem. It serves to indicate both *yiras haonesh* as well as *yiras haromemus*. One who truly views *cheit* as a spiritual poison and understands the severity of *onesh* involved with violating the word of Hashem will not suffice to passively abstain from *aveiros*. He will actively search for ways to guard himself from coming anywhere near *cheit*. Just as one who has poison in his house will not leave it out in a way that it may inadvertently be eaten, one who views *cheit* as spiritual poison will make every effort to protect himself from any association with it.

Yiras haromemus is the corollary of *shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*. One who truly believes he is constantly in the presence of Hashem will be filled with the awe that is natural to be felt being in His presence. One who is in the king's palace is on his best behavior and scrutinizes his every action and word, lest he offend the king. If we are truly in the presence of *Melech Malchei Hamelachim*, how much more so are we obligated to guard ourselves not to violate the word of The King. We have to take extra precautions not to even come close to violating an actual *mitzvah*.

Shlomo *Hamelech* accomplished many great things during his lifetime. Part of his legacy to us is *Asu syag laTorah*. He taught us how to grow in our *yiras haonesh* and our *yiras haromemus*. It is through our dedication to *gezeiros drabanan* that we demonstrate to Hashem our desire for *yiras shomayim*. May we merit that Hashem grants all of us *chayim sheyesh bohem yiras shomayim v'yiras cheit, chayim sheyesh bohem ahavas Torah v'yiras shomayim*.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/parsha/rsob_acharei.html

Our Dual Relationship with the Secular World

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

When Yaakov returned to *Eretz Yisroel* he “encamped” (“*vayichan*”) on the outskirts of the city Shechem (Breishis 33:18). The rabbis of the Talmud (Shabbos 33a) understand the *possuk* to imply that in addition he improved and “beautified” the city, either by instituting a coin system, or a public bath house, or a shopping mall. The *medrash* understands yet an additional level of interpretation on the phrase “*vayivchan*”, that Yaakov established his *techum* for *Shabbos* purposes. The *halacha* declares that at the start of *Shabbos* each Jewish person has to determine where “his home” is, and has a very limited area around “his home” where he may roam about. Yaakov established his “home” and determined where his limited area of walking would be.

The Torah (*Breishis* 23:4) quotes Avraham *Avinu* as telling the *bnei Chet* (who lived in Kiryat Arba) that he was both a stranger and a regular citizen dwelling among them. These two terms are mutually exclusive! If one is a regular citizen, he is not at all a guest or a stranger – so how did Avraham describe himself as being simultaneously a stranger and a citizen? The answer obviously is that all religious Jews relate to the outside world about them in a dual fashion. In many areas we work along with everyone else as full partners. We all use the world together and have a reciprocal obligation towards each other to make it more livable and more comfortable. When we were born we entered into a world full of beautiful trees, a world with hospitals, medications, etc. Therefore we all have an obligation to provide for such conveniences and institutions for the next generation. All of mankind is considered one big partnership in a certain sense, just as people living in the same community are considered as belonging to a partnership, and are therefore obligated to contribute towards that partnership – in order to further develop it – in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the partners.

Yaakov *Avinu*, like his grandfather Avraham, felt obligated to establish shopping malls etc. to improve everyone's quality of living. Yes, we are all obligated to participate in all civic, scientific, and political enterprises which will enrich the lives of the entire community.

But at the same time the religious Jew has his own unique outlook on life and style of living. The tradition of the Talmud was, based on the *possuk* in Eicha (2:9), that although there is much *chochma* (knowledge and wisdom) to be gained from the secular world, but “Torah” (teaching a way of life and an outlook on the world) can not be picked up from the other disciplines. These can only be acquired through the revealed truths of the Torah.

Avraham Avinu says that although he is on the one hand a full-fledged citizen, at the same time he feels he is a stranger amongst his non-Jewish neighbors, and not only does he lead his life differently from them, even after death he may not bury his spouse Sara in the regular cemetery. Even in death, the Jew stands alone. And similarly Yaakov, despite the fact that he’s so involved in improving the entire society, nonetheless he feels it necessary to chart out his *techum*, indicating that he can not “go out of his box” to mingle freely with all of his neighbors. He is absolutely unique and alone. The Torah mentions the fact that the Jewish people always stands alone (see *Bamidbar* 23:9), and this is linked (*Devarim* 33:28) to the “standing alone” of Yaakov Avinu.

Immediately after the mention of the fact that Yaakov wanted his family to stand alone, the Torah relates what tragedy followed (*perek* 34) when Dina decided to disobey her father’s instructions and “hang out” with the local girls her age.

The Torah commanded us (“*u’shmartem es mishmarti*” - *Vayikra* 18:30) to introduce safeguards to the *mitzvos*. Not only are we Biblically forbidden to carry in a *reshush harabbim*, we must also abstain from carrying in a *karmelis*, lest we forget and carry in a *reshus harabim*. Not only are we Biblically prohibited to eat meat cooked with milk, we should also avoid eating chicken with cheese, lest this will lead to eating real *basar bechalav*. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto wrote in his classic work *Mesilas Yesharim* that the Torah’s command to “erect a fence” (“*asu s’yag laTorah*” – *Avos* 1:1) about the *mitzvos*, to protect us from even coming close to sin, is not addressed only to the rabbis. Each individual must introduce personal “*harchakos*” (safeguards) depending on his or her particular situation.

The Torah relates (*Breishis* 35:2-4) that Yaakov disposed of all the *avoda zarah* (idols) in his possession which his children had taken from Shechem. The commentaries point out that *avoda zarah* ought to really be burnt. Why didn’t Yaakov destroy them? The suggestion is offered (see *Sforono*) that the people of Shechem had already been “*mevatel*” these *avoda zarahs*, so strictly speaking, they had already lost their status of *avoda zarah*. Yaakov’s disposing of them was a *chumra* that he thought appropriate in his circumstance.

A man like Yaakov who is very involved in the outside world, establishing shopping malls, etc., has to accept upon himself additional *chumras* and *harchakos* to prevent himself from being swallowed up by the secular society around him. One who sits in the *beis hamedrash* all day long, or who lives in Bnei Brak or Meah Shearim doesn’t really need all such extra *chumras* or *harchakos*; he’s no where near the secular world.

The same word (“*vayichan*”) which indicates how Yaakov acted in accordance with the concept of “*toshav*” (a regular citizen of the world), also has the additional connotation of drawing the lines for isolation through *techumin*. We all have an obligation to strike a proper and reasonable balance between our status as *ger* and *toshav*; and the more one functions as a *toshav*, the more that individual must personally emphasize that he is at the same time really a “*ger*”.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2005/parsha/rsch_vayishlach.html