

KI SEITZEI (DEUTERONOMY 21:10-25:18)

Keep the Fiddler on the Roof!

2002 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Anyone who has any religious training at all is familiar with the "boilerplate" phraseology that begins every blessing.

When we perform a religious ceremony, we thank G-d for giving us the opportunity to become holy. "You are blessed, our G-d, King of the world, who has made us holy with His Mitzvahs, and has commanded us to ____."

There are lots of ceremonies with which we can fill in the blank: "...and has commanded us to..."

"...light Shabbos (or Yom Tov or Chanukah) candles." "...eat Matzah." "...perform a circumcision."
"...hear the sound of the Shofar." "...sit in the Succah."

The list goes on. Whenever we perform a religious ceremony, a holy act, we thank G-d for giving us the opportunity to make ourselves holy.

What we sometimes allow ourselves to forget is that holiness can be found in places other than the synagogue and Seder table.

One of the blessings that can be found in the prayer book is a rather uncommon one, most likely to be recited as a carpenter is helping you put the finishing touches on your house: "You are blessed, our G-d, King of the world, who has made us holy with His Mitzvahs, and has commanded us to ... make a fence."

The Torah tells us "*When you build a new house, make a fence for your roof. Do not place blood in your house if someone falls...*" (Deuteronomy, 22:8)

This verse is the biblical source for the requirement of maintaining a safe home. The Talmud (Kesuvas, 41b) inquires as to the source for the prohibition of raising a bad dog (a pit bull, perhaps?) in one's home or putting up a shaky ladder. The Talmud refers us to the verse, "*Do not place blood in your house...*"

Maintaining safety is a very smart thing to do. It is very important to be socially responsible. But why do we say a blessing? Building a fence is not exactly a religious ceremony, is it?

Yes, it is. What could be a holier act than protecting G-d's children?

TORAH TALK KI SEITZEI (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:18)

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

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