

I. Introduction

A. פותחין

B. **Icebreaker** – Good fences make good neighbours

1. What are the positions of the neighbours regarding walls? <>
 - a. Neighbour 1 – Who needs it? We're honest people!
 - b. Neighbour 2 – My father says it's a good idea
2. What would the Torah say? <>
 - a. **Mishnah Bava Batra 1:1** – Assuming there is enough land to make it worthwhile for each of them, one can compel the other.
 - b. **But does the Torah want walls between parties?**

II. It seems that Torah sees walls as destructive, like Neighbour 1

A. Separating “haves” and “have nots”

1. Shemos 23:11 says תשמטנה ונטשתה, and **Mechilta d'R' Yishmael, Mishpatim, Masechta d'Kaspa 20** says מגיד שפורץ בה פרצות that we should make holes. Chachamim didn't require it; Zayit Raanan on Mechilta explains it's lest people destroy the trees.
2. Granted that **Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Sheviis 4:24** doesn't require it, only saying not to create new fences, the point is made.
3. Message <> Walls make us less likely to help

B. Separating urban life from agriculture

1. Vayikra 25:29-31 - The Torah bans family estates in walled-in cities. If a family sells an open field, they receive the field back in the Yovel year. But if a family sells a building in a walled city, that building never comes back.
2. **R' SRH to Vayikra 25:34** – The Torah's goal is to preserve אוכלוסיה עירונית העוסקת בחקלאות.
 - a. Because **R' SRH to Bereishis 4:1** – Farming is the natural work of a human being, designed to turn all of his energies toward producing sustenance, and along the way developing craft, culture and community. The Torah wishes us to remain close to the land.
 - b. Think about it – Adam and Chavah are told מלאו את הארץ וכבשוה. And had they done it, as noted in Megadim, they wouldn't have sinned!
 - c. In truth, there are negatives in farming, in enslavement to the land.
 - i. Kayin is described as עובד אדמה. And indeed, as R' Sacks notes in making a separate point, the product is not "his"; it is פרי האדמה.
 - ii. Noach is described as איש האדמה – not owner of the land, but owned by the land.
 - iii. Like Kohelet 5:8 – The greatest benefit of a land is when its king is “slave to the field”. – מלך לשדה נעבד.
 - d. But the field is considered an ideal place for human creativity – and the wall sets us to stagnate, instead, by fencing that off.
3. Message <> Walls confine us to our constructs

C. Separating us from our enemies

1. **Devarim 28:52** warns that we have too much confidence in our walls, and Gd will demolish them
2. **Tanchuma Shelach 6** – If the Canaanites live in walled cities, that is a sign of their weakness. And in contradistinction, **Zecharyah 2:8** promises that in the future, Yerushalayim will be an open city.
3. Indeed, that may be why Hashem specifically defeats Yericho, our first enemy in the land, by demolishing the walls – to send us a message.
4. Message <> Walls increase confidence in our own construction

D. Summary line: Something there is that doesn't love a wall, in the Torah. There are negative, unhelpful walls – walls that insulate the wealthy from the needy, walls that enable urban stagnation, walls that lead to arrogance.

III. But the Torah also has walls we like, like Neighbour 2! <>

A. The walls of Yerushalayim generate kedushah

1. **Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beis haBechirah 1:5** shows they create kedushah
 2. **The Rav on קדושת מחיצות and אהלי אשר חנית מאז בתאיו** – kedushah is created by these walls.
- B. And even as we saw Zechariah 2:8 speak of Yerushalayim being open, **Zechariah 2:9** speaks of HaShem being a wall of fire for Yerushalayim!
- C. Further, **we** use walls for beautiful mitzvos <> the succah in which we dwell with Hashem, the chuppah in which we initiate a Jewish home!
- D. How, then, are we to understand the Jewish view of a wall? Are they bad, or good? **Is** there a single answer? What would Rabbi Robert Frost say?

IV. Answer: The Westgate Studies

- A. In the 1940s, a team of MIT psychologists conducted the “Westgate Studies”, trying to figure out which interactions lead to friendships.
1. They developed what is now known as the propinquity effect. To state it simply: Even though people say that “familiarity breeds contempt,” the truth of human nature is that the more you encounter someone, the more likely you are to like them, and to create a friendship with them.
 2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propinquity>
- B. Those studies have influenced the way companies design their workspaces. For example: <http://99u.com/articles/16408/how-to-build-a-collaborative-office-space-like-pixar-and-google> says the successful animation company Pixar initially housed its computer scientists in one building, its animators in another building, and its executives and editors in a third building. Steve Jobs, as CEO, redesigned the offices to bring all of the groups together, into one space. Why? Because inhabiting a shared, collaborative space encourages relationships. And this can be enhanced by a surrounding wall that accentuates the collaboration.

V. Proposal: Two kinds of walls in Torah

- A. Exclusive and Inclusive
1. The Exclusive wall is the wall around the field, meant to exclude and obstruct: the wall that locks out the needy; the wall that separates the city from nature; the wall that provides overconfident defense. This is the wall the Torah would demolish.
 2. But there is also the Inclusive wall, that creates collaborative closeness, even intimacy, by enhancing propinquity for those within.
 3. Of course, all walls are both inclusive and exclusive – but the question is what is our focus
- B. We want inclusive walls for ourselves
1. We, as Jews, identify ourselves as part of a nation, a community, a team. To promote that shared identity and cohesion, we build walls encircling and identifying our team. This wall, designed to **include**, to **embrace**, to **envelop** in private community – this wall is not merely appropriate, but glorious!
 2. Like Eruv, and קביעות מקום within walls for a shared berachah.
- C. And similarly for other types of unifying seclusion
1. The walls of the Succah seclude us with HaShem!
 2. **Michah 6:8** – והצנע לכת עם ד' אלקיך
 3. The walls of the Chuppah isolate a couple exclusively for each other!
- D. And to come to our theme, Yerushalayim - The walls of Yerushalayim demarcate מַחֲנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל, a camp which the Rambam **Beis haBechirah 1:5** (above) said is invested with eternal holiness **by those very walls**.

VI. The Walls of Yerushalayim

- A. The walls of Yerushalayim are positive walls, meant **not** to exclude Beit Lechem and Chevron and other surrounding cities, but rather to **encircle** the people within, Jews of all ages and all ethnicities and all types of observance, to create a unified community.
- B. Those walls of Yerushalayim are large enough to embrace us all - and as Avos 5:5 promises, no Jew will ever say, “I cannot find my place in Yerushalayim.” (Indeed, Tashbetz 3:201 claims the miracle continues today! See my shiur from before Shacharis.)
- C. And our sages acted to maintain that sense of community, beyond just having walls
1. Three times each year, Jews from far and wide would gather there for Yom Tov, fulfilling the mitzvah of aliyah laregel. Some of these were very observant Jews, and others were less so. **This**

meeting of populations could have been a disaster – there could have been an insistence on separate shopping spaces for the ritually pure, separate eating areas for those who tithe more carefully, and so on.

2. But the Chachamim understood that **the only wall Yerushalayim will tolerate is the wall surrounding it, the wall which identifies all of us as part of the same team!** As the gemara records, they decreed that when we gather in Yerushalayim for Yom Tov, every Jew should be viewed as a **חבר**, credible to declare his own purity, credible to have tithed his produce. We could travel together, eat together, meet together, within those walls of Yerushalayim. See **Maharitz Chiyes to Niddah 34a**.
- D. This is what we want. There are legitimate differences among Jews, but what we want is **not** a nation divided by the questions of Who is a Jew, of Who goes to the army and who learns in kollel, of Who davens at the Kotel and in what way, but a nation that sees itself as one nation, indivisible, **surrounded by walls** which confirm our shared heritage and our shared destiny.
- E. And this imperative for propinquity extends beyond Yerushalayim, mandating us to build physical and metaphorical **inclusive walls surrounding us**, marking us as one nation wherever we are, despite our legitimate differences.
 1. No matter where people daven, and even if they don't daven anywhere.
 2. No matter what standard of kashrus they keep, and even if they don't keep any.
 3. No matter which approach they have to Israel, whether they believe it's **ראשית צמיחת גאולתנו** or whether they believe it's a secular catastrophe.
 4. Inviting these people into our homes for a meal – **not only** because it's kiruv, but because we are **areivin zeh bazeh**.
 5. Offering to daven on behalf of their relatives and friends who are ill – **not only** because davening for others is a mitzvah, but because we care about each other.
 6. Even just smiling and welcoming people who aren't within the circle of friends and cousins with whom we grew up, and whom we've known for decades – **not** because it's chesed, but because it's **the right way to build a wall**.
 7. These, like the walls of Yerushalayim, are the glorious, encircling walls beloved to the Torah.

VII. Summary and closer

- A. In 1987, with Soviet Communism teetering, US President Ronald Reagan visited West Berlin, and he delivered a speech which became an instant classic. Standing before the wall dividing East and West Berlin, he proclaimed, "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"
- B. That historic line almost didn't happen. The speechwriter, Peter Robinson, wanted it in, but nervous diplomats insisted that Germans had grown used to the wall. So Robinson went to dinner with some local residents, and he asked them if they had "gotten used to" the Wall – to which the residents responded harshly that they certainly had not. The rest is oratorical history.
(<http://parade.com/25838/viannnguyen/the-story-behind-reagans-tear-down-this-wall-speech/>) And two years later, the wall did finally come down.
- C. With the laws of shemitah and walled cities, with the warning of the Tochachah, the Torah teaches us to "tear down this wall" which divides. But with the succah and the chuppah and the holiness of Yerushalayim, the Torah teaches us to "build up this wall" of propinquity which encircles and envelops, creating shared identity and community. Such is the beauty of the walls of Yerushalayim.
- D. May we see Hashem rebuild these walls with fire; may we see Hashem rebuild these walls now; and may we view them not by livestream on our phones in Toronto, but as part of that sacred community, from the inside.

1. Robert Frost, *Mending Wall* (excerpt)
Something there is that doesn't love a wall
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast...
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go...
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows?
But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.'...
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

The Walls of Neighbour 1

2. Midrash, Mechilta d'R' Yishmael Parshat Mishpatim, Masechta d'Kaspa 20

"והשביעית תשמטנה ונטשתה (שמות כג:יא)" מפני מה אמרה תורה, לא שיאכלו אותה עניים? הרי אני מכניסה ומחלקה לעניים! תלמוד לומר "והשביעית תשמטנה, ונטשתה," מגיד שפורץ בה פרצות, אלא שגדרו חכמים מפני תקון העולם.

"And on the seventh, you shall release it and abandon it (Shemot 23:11)" – Why did the Torah say this, if not for paupers to eat it? I will bring in the produce and distribute it to the needy! Therefore the verse says, "And on the seventh, you shall release it and abandon it." This tells us to break holes in the fences, but the sages fenced it in to improve the world.

3. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shemitah v'Yovel 4:24

מצות עשה להשמיט כל מה שתוציא הארץ בשביעית, שנאמר "והשביעית תשמטנה ונטשתה." וכל הנועל כרמו או סג שדהו בשביעית ביטל מצות עשה, וכן אם אסף כל פירותיו לתוך ביתו.

There is a commandment to release all that the land produces in the seventh year, as it says, "And on the seventh, you shall release it and abandon it." Anyone who locks his vineyard or fences his field in the seventh cancels a commandment. The same is true if one gathers all of his produce into his home.

4. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary to Vayikra 25:34 (Dayan Grunfeld translation from the German)

For clearly these laws establish the greatest possible upkeep of an "urban population occupied with agriculture" as the predominant fundamental characteristic type of the Nation. It places an obstacle to the growth of large cities at the

expense of the surrounding country which otherwise is so very prevalent... [B]y the way that the houses in the country towns were protected, like the land itself, from permanent sale, and in *yovel* reverted to the original owners or their heirs, provision was made, that, on the whole, town and land remained in connection as family property; so that, as a rule, every field and every vineyard would have as its proprietor a householder in the neighbouring town...

5. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary to Bereishit 4:1 (Dayan Grunfeld translation from the German)

On the one hand, however, all the great advances in the development of culture have been stimulated by agriculture, and a great part of the inventions and arts have been evoked by it. By personal contact, society, the state, administration of justice all come into being... But on the other hand, working on the land always has the tendency to lower the agricultural worker more and down to the level of the clod which he serves. In bending his neck under the yoke of the effort to attain real property his soul too becomes bowed...

6. Devarim 28:52

וְהִצָּר לָךְ בְּכָל־שְׁעֶיךָ עַד רִדָּת חֲמֹתֶיךָ הַגְּבֹהֹת וְהַבְּצֻרוֹת אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בֹטָח בָּהֶן בְּכָל־אַרְצְךָ...

And he will besiege you at all of your gates, until the collapse of your tall and reinforced walls, in which you trust all through your land...

7. Midrash Tanchuma, Shelach 6

מִנֵּין אַתֶּם יוֹדְעִים כַּחַם הַבְּמַחֲנִים אִם בַּמְּבַצְרִים אִם בַּמַּחֲנִים הֵם שְׂרוּיִם הֵם גְּבוּרִים וּבֹטְחִים עַל כַּחַם אִם בַּמְּבַצְרִים חֲלָשִׁים הֵם וְלִבָּם רָךְ.
How will you determine their strength? "Are they in open camps or in fortresses?" If they live in open camps, they are mighty, and they rely upon their strength. If they are in fortresses, they are weak and of soft heart.

8. Zechariah 2:8

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רֵץ דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי־הַנֶּעֱרָר הָלָז לֵאמֹר פְּרוּזֹת תֵּשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם מְרַב אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה בְּתוֹכָהּ

And the *malach* said to him [another *malach*]: Run, tell this youth [Zechariah] to say: Jerusalem will dwell in open areas, due to the multitudes of people and animals in her.

The Walls of Neighbour 2

9. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beit haBechirah 1:5

ואלו הן הדברים שהן עיקר בבנין הבית, עושין בו קדש וקדש הקדשים ויהיה לפני הקדש מקום אחד והוא הנקרא אולם, ושלשתן נקראין היכל, ועושין מחיצה אחרת סביב להיכל רחוקה ממנו כעין קלעי החצר שהיו במדבר, וכל המוקף במחיצה זו שהוא כעין חצר אהל מועד הוא הנקרא עזרה והכל נקרא מקדש.

And these are the essential elements of construction of the House: We make a *Kodesh* and a *Kodesh hakodashim* in it, and there should be a space before the *Kodesh*, called the *Ulam*. The three of them are called *Heichal*. They make another divider around the *Heichal*, distant, like the hangings of the yard in the wilderness. Anything surrounded by this divider, which is like the yard of the *Ohel Moed*, is called *Azarah*. The entire area is called *Mikdash*.

10. *Ahali*, Kinot of Tishah b'Av

אהלי אשר חנית מאז בתאיו, מפה ומפה...

My tent, in which You camped in its *ta'ot*, from here and from here...

11. Zechariah 2:9

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לָּהּ נֹאמָד' חֹמַת אֵשׁ סָבִיב וּלְכָבוֹד אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ:

And I will be for her – this is the word of Gd – a surrounding wall of fire, and the honour in her midst.

The Westgate Studies

12. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propinquity>

The propinquity effect is the tendency for people to form friendships or romantic relationships with those whom they encounter often, forming a bond between subject and friend. Occupational propinquity, based on a person's career, is also commonly seen as a factor in marriage selection. Workplace interactions are frequent and this frequent interaction is often a key indicator as to why close relationships can readily form in this type of environment. In other

words, relationships tend to form between those who have a high propinquity. It was first theorized by psychologists Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter and Kurt Back in what came to be called the *Westgate studies* conducted at MIT (1950).

13. <http://99u.com/articles/16408/how-to-build-a-collaborative-office-space-like-pixar-and-google>

Festinger and his colleagues approached the students some months after they had moved into Westgate West, and asked them to list their three closest friends. The results were fascinating—and they had very little to do with values, beliefs, and attitudes. Forty-two percent of the responses were direct neighbors, so the resident of apartment 7 was quite likely to list the residents of apartments 6 and 8 as friends—and less likely to list the residents of apartments 9 and 10. Even more striking, the lucky residents of apartments 1 and 5 turned out to be the most popular, not because they happened to be kinder or more interesting, but because they happened to live at the bottom of the staircase that their upstairs neighbors were forced to use to reach the building's second floor. Some of these accidental interactions fizzled, of course, but in contrast to the isolated residents of apartments 2 and 4, those in apartments 1 and 5 had a better chance of meeting one or two kindred spirits.

Half a century passed, and the Westgate West message began to infiltrate office culture. Steve Jobs famously redesigned the offices at Pixar, which originally housed computer scientists in one building, animators in a second building, and executives and editors in a third. Jobs recognized that separating these groups, each with its own culture and approach to problem-solving, discouraged them from sharing ideas and solutions. Perhaps the animators could introduce a fresh perspective when the computer scientists became stuck; and maybe the executives would learn more about the nuts and bolts of the business if they occasionally met an animator in the office kitchen, or a computer scientist at the water cooler. Jobs ultimately succeeded in creating a single cavernous office that housed the entire Pixar team, and John Lasseter, Pixar's chief creative officer, declared that he'd "never seen a building that promoted collaboration and creativity as well as this one."

Two Kinds of Walls

14. Michah 6:8

הִגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מִה־טוֹב וּמִה־ד' דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצָּנֶע לְכַת עִם־אֱלֹקֶיךָ:

He has told you, Man, what is good: What does Gd require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk privately with your Gd?

15. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes, Niddah 34a

גדול הפירוד במה שאדם מונע עצמו לאכול אצל ישראל חבירו, ובפרט עת רעה שאינו נאמן אצלו על המעשרות ועל הטהרות. ולא לחנם אמר ר' עקיבא כשהיה עם הארץ מי יתן לי תלמיד חכם ואנשכנו כחמור והיה עיקר הסיבה לעליית רגל משום לחבר את לבות ישראל זה לזה אבל עדיין לא תושג המטרה אם לא יהיו נאמנים זה לזה לטהרות וראו חז"ל עצות מרחוק להשבית המונע שלא יבא השטן לרקד ביניהם הימים הקדושים הללו לגרום שנאה ופירוד הלבבות. ועשאו כל ישראל חברים בשעת הרגל. ואף עמי הארץ נאמנים אז על יינם ועל שמנם. ומפני זה הרשות לחבר ועם הארץ לאכול יחד לחם ולהיות יחד בסעודת מרעים, ועל זה תגדל האהבה ויתחברו הלבבות זה לזה.

The division caused is great when a person abstains from eating with another Jew, and the moment is especially bad when he is not credible regarding tithes and purity. It was not for naught that R' Akiva said, when he was an *am ha'aretz*, "Who would give me a Torah scholar, and I would bite him like a donkey!"

The essential reason for holiday pilgrimages was to join the hearts of Israel, but that goal would not be achieved if they would not be mutually credible regarding purity.

The sages saw farsighted counsel to eliminate the obstacle, lest the Satan come to dance among them on these sacred days, causing enmity and division of hearts. They made all Israel as *chaverim* in the time of the festival, and even *amei ha'aretz* are credible at that time for their wine and their oil.

Because of this, *chaver* and *am ha'aretz* could eat bread together and join together in a meal of friends, and so increase love and join hearts to each other.