

***This week's Torah portion, Parshat Ki Tetze contains an inordinate amount of Mitzvot (74 to be precise). While all of them are certainly worthy of thought and reflection, there is one that is often overlooked and chalked up to simple common sense. The verse says, "When you build a new house, then you shall make a fence for your roof, and you shall not bring not blood upon your house, because he will fall from it". The Torah seems to be quite pessimistic; do we have to assume that someone will fall from the roof? It is really necessary for the Torah to warn us about bringing blood upon the house? Could the Torah not have simply directed us to construct a fence so that no one will fall from it?***

***The great Chassidic masters often explain that even the most simple of the Torah's laws often contain profound and inspirational advice for daily living. The Gerrer Rebbe explains that this mandate to construct a fence on the roof of a new house also contains an essential and vital message for our daily life. The Rebbe explains that this verse does not refer just to a new edifice, but also to the new heights we attain in great moments of spiritual growth. For many people this new found spiritual greatness can be achieved at an inspirational summer program, a great lecture, or more traditionally during the High Holiday season. Yet, regardless of the source of the inspiration, the challenge is identical; how does one insure that he does not fall from this newfound spiritual height? How can one transform this momentary spark into a new reality?***

***The painful truth is that we will fall, even as we achieve great new spiritual heights, we might already be on the way down, because this is the reality of the mortal. We are not stagnant; the human is a dynamic being, always fluctuating between strength and weakness, holiness and impurity, corporeal and spiritual. Our falls are inevitable, the question is only how far down will we fall? How hard will it hurt? And can we get back up again? The fences that we build on top of our new houses are the things that we do on our way up the ladder of spirituality. They are the little things that we begin to incorporate in our daily life. If these small changes truly become part of our new reality, they will catch us on the way down and insure that our falls are not steep, dangerous and impossible to recover from.***

***In Proverbs, King Solomon wrote, "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again, but the wicked stumble under adversity." All of us will experience failure and disappointment, yet the righteous do not stagger and crumble under the burden of their errors, because their fences were strong and sturdy.***

***May our fences be like those of the righteous and our falls be neither steep nor serious.***

***Shabbat Shalom  
Rabbi Meir Tannenbaum***