



אשר
קרד
בזרד

פרשת זכור
LESSON PLAN

"זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק..."

Objective: With a partner, students will demonstrate their understanding of the pitfalls and manifestations of the middah of קרירות and לצנות by writing a sample scenario and pinpointing the 'cold spiritual temperatures' at work.

Anticipatory Set: Students are divided into groups of four. Each group member receives an article clipping. Each clipping presents, in a scientific, experimental, or anecdotal format, the natural impacts of cold temperatures. Following are overviews of each clipping:

- In medicine: application of cold compresses and creams serves to numb and anesthetize a patient, thereby reducing the patient's ability to *feel*.
- In culinary arts: when a food is served at cold temperatures, its rich tastes are all but lost and the dish's spices, aromas, and flavors are greatly reduced. Thus, cold inhibits our ability to *taste* and *appreciate flavors*.
- In the military and sports: studies show that cold temperatures inhibit a soldier's ability to *react*.
- In farming and botany: cold temperatures prevent crops and flowers from *growing*.

Each student reads her own clipping, and writes an answer to the following question: what is the natural effect of cold presented in this article? What do cold temperatures diminish, inhibit, or prevent?

After answering their own questions, each student summarizes and repeats the content and conclusion of her clipping to the remainder of her group. Then, on the board, review the four given impacts of cold.

- Reduces our ability to feel
- Reduces our ability to taste
- Reduces our ability to react
- Reduces our ability to grow

Then, commence with discussion. The aforementioned impacts of cold are given in the context of a natural, physical environment. Yet, the spiritual world mirrors the physical one, and these phenomena are manifest in our רוחניות'דיק environment, as well. When it comes to our 'עבודת ה', there is something called 'cold' – and 'עבודת ה' in קרירות results in these same inhibitions and inabilities.

Where do we learn about this 'coldness' from? *Prompt students for response.*

עמלק.

Tell the Objective: In today's class, we will learn about the roots of קרירות, and we will explore its manifestations in our own 'עבודת ה'. We will discuss the negative results that cold spiritual temperatures have.

Purpose: This lesson will encourage us to 'raise the temperature' in our 'עבודת ה', and will provide us with strategies for doing so.

Input: This week, we learn a part of the חומש that talks about עמלק. Why do we specifically read it this week, before Purim? Because המן, the villain of Purim, was a descendent of עמלק. We have a specific מצוה to remember that which עמלק did to us on our way out of מצרים; this week is most apropos for the fulfillment of that מצוה:

דברים כה:יז: זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתך ממצרים אשר קרך בדרך...

What is the primary fault of עמלק? They cooled off – they lowered the temperature – קרך. What, precisely, did they cool?

After קריעת ים סוף and יציאת מצרים, all the nations of the world heard about the great נסים that were done for כלל ישראל. They were all in awe, and no one dared start up with בני"י and their G-d. *Prompt students to reply:* Can you describe the great fear that circulated after קריעת ים סוף?

שמעו עמים ירגזון חיל אחז יושבי פלשת אז נבהלו אלופי אדם אלי מואב יאחזמו רעד נמגו כל יושבי"י
...כנען תפל עליהם אימתה ופחד בגדל זרעך ידמו כאבן

The nations trembled. They were gripped with fright. They were panicked; they melted away. Terror and dread overcame them.

And in the midst of this roiling reaction, who dared start up with כלל ישראל?

ויבא עמלק.

עמלק was impervious to the terror that had stricken all the other nations. עמלק embodied the attitude of קרירות – of coldness. When they started up with כלל ישראל, they effectively cooled off the fear of the other nations, as well. רש"י describes עמלק as being the first to jump into a boiling, bubbling tub. Everyone else is fearful of the heat. Yet once one person jumps in and cools off the water, others will follow suit and jump in after him. So, too, the

קרירות of עמלק seeped into the hearts of the nations and now they were unafraid to fight with בני"י.

What is the מדה of עמלק – the מדה that breeds קרירות?

Can you think of an attitude in English that also expresses this inner temperature? *Prompt students for response.*

On a scrap piece of paper, students should write a simple definition of someone whose attitude is 'cool'. Do not focus on their external appearance, but rather on their approach toward others, their attitude toward life in general, how receptive they are to lessons, etc.

What is the general attitude of a person who is 'too cool'? They are sarcastic. They are cynical. They don't let themselves be impressed.

Model and Example: Consider the following scenario. A guest speaker visits your school and gives a passionate, inspiring speech about an important topic. After the speech finishes, everyone is silent as they absorb her words. But then, on the way back to the classroom, a 'cool' girl pipes up. What does she say? "Come on – that was totally exaggerated!" she might laugh. Or, she may snidely remark: "Ooooh, so now you're going to be a major צדקת?" What just happened to your inspiration and passion?

Check for Understanding: Can you give your own example where someone's 'coolness' – their cynicism and sarcasm – cools off the passion of everyone around them?

R' Hutner זצ"ל said that "So what?" is the עמלק of our generation." What does this mean? Those who are sarcastic, cynical, and unimpressed by words and events approach life with an attitude of 'so what.' What difference does it make? Who cares? What's the big deal? What does it have to do with me? Those whose attitude toward life, lessons, and inspiration is 'so what', channel the מדה of עמלק. Their spirit is cold: it is not warmed by the fire of inspiration and it is not heated by the energy of excitement and enthusiasm.

Let's explore how such a person is impacted by their cold spiritual temperatures.

Model and Example: As stated, a person who is 'cold' is numb. They cannot feel; their sensations are dulled. Consider when there is an awful tragedy in the world, and everyone who hears about it is moved to do תשובה. Many people will take on a קבלה to improve as a

result of the news. But what about a person who is sarcastic and cynical? What might they say? “Come on. I mean, I know it’s sad and all, but really... it’s thousands of miles away. And anyway, it’s very nice that you think you’re taking on a קבלה – but let’s see how long it will really last.” Such a person is numb. She is too ‘cool’ to be impressed or motivated by the news. She cannot feel the impact. She cannot sense the pain and the motivation that emerges from the צער. She is numb, and therefore she is not impacted.

This numbness is exactly what עמלק demonstrated. The rest of the world was quaking in terror, but they were numb. They were not impacted, and therefore they came to fight against בני"י. You can try to imagine, כביכול, their attitude: “Come on... what are you so afraid of? Why won’t you go fight against them; what’s the big deal?!”

In the פרשה immediately following the war with עמלק, we learn about יתרו, who was motivated to leave his home and come join בני"י. What propelled him to come? רש"י states:

"מה שמועה שמע ובא? קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק."

What did he hear that impacted him so strongly? He heard about קריעת ים סוף and the war with עמלק. Now, קריעת ים סוף we understand – he heard about the great נסים that occurred. But the second part of this רש"י is slightly difficult. We would have expected רש"י to tell us that he heard about the *victory* over עמלק – the great נסים that helped כלל ישראל triumph! Yet, רש"י states that it was the war itself that caused him to come. Why? R’ Elya Lopian explains that when יתרו heard about the fact that עמלק came to wage war, he was disturbed by the very fact that עמלק could remain unaffected and untouched after the great miracles of קריעת ים סוף. In other words, he heard about קריעת ים סוף and about עמלק’s impervious reaction to the נסים. This prompted him to come join כלל ישראל, so that he himself would not suffer from the numbness of עמלק.

Check for Understanding: Explain in your own words: what precisely did יתרו hear that prompted him to come join בני"י?

Model and Example: Another aforementioned impact of cold temperatures is that a person cannot taste. People who are not cold can listen to a speech and be inspired. They can hear a powerful story and be moved. They can see a beautiful sight and feel a stirring in their heart. They can ‘taste’ the richness, inspiration, and motivation in the world. Yet, a person who is cynical cannot taste these sublime flavors. A sarcastic personality will fail to appreciate the richness of an event, lesson, or story. Everything tastes the same to them; their frequent

response is: “So what? Why are you so inspired by that silly story? Why are you so impressed by that speech?” It’s as if they literally don’t taste the inspirational flavor of the moment.

Check for Understanding: Can you give a practical example of how a sarcastic / cynical person demonstrates an inability to taste and experience inspiration?

The **מסילת ישרים** describes that a cynical person is comparable to one who wears an oil coated shield. What happens to something that is oil coated? Everything just slides right off. Nothing can penetrate. No world events – no inspirational lessons – no words of **מוסר** – can move them. They just don’t ‘get it’ – they are numb and impenetrable. They cannot feel, they cannot taste.

Model and Example: Another influence of cold temperatures is that it delays or inhibits our ability to react. Those who are warm and enthusiastic will immediately act upon inspiration and be changed. Those who are ‘too cool,’ though, will fail to react and engage in practical change. This inability to react is illustrated in the following anecdote.

R’ Chatzkel Levenstein זצ"ל once spoke with a secular Israeli taxi driver, who related a remarkable incident. After completing his stint in the Israeli army, this man went on a journey to India with a secular friend. When the two were resting in the jungle, a poisonous snake wound itself around his friend’s head. The friend emitted a piercing shriek of **שמע ישראל** – and the snake immediately unwound itself and slithered away. The taxi driver related that his friend was so moved, that he became a **בעל תשובה** and joined the **חרדי** community. R’ Chatzkel faced the irreligious driver and asked: “What about you? You were right there – why didn’t you become a **בעל תשובה**?” To which the driver responded: “It didn’t happen to me – it happened to my friend!”

This anecdote depicts a total inability to react. His internal temperatures were too cold; he could not be moved by the astounding miracle and failed to respond to the clear message by making meaningful change. This driver effectively said, “So what?! It didn’t happen to me – it happened to my friend!” Thus, he was immobilized and did not react to the wondrous event that he witnessed.

Let’s explore an exaggerated example. You’re standing in the crosswalk with a friend when suddenly she pulls on your arm and shouts, “a car is coming!” Now, what is the healthy response? To immediately take action and jump. On the other hand, what would happen if you were not moved by her scream and instead you said, “So what?” With that attitude, you

would just remain in your position without moving out of the path of the car. Clearly, ‘So what?’ is a dangerous attitude that prevents you from taking action when necessary!

Another example of how this attitude causes an inability to react is seen in the מצרים. All of the Egyptians witnessed the first few מכות. Intellectually, they all should have been impressed. Yet, after they were warned about מכת ברד, there were still some מצרים who left their cattle in the fields and did not take them indoors for shelter. Hashem specifically said: “I will cause a very severe hail... let your property and everything that you have in the field take refuge, for every man and beast that will be found in the field and will not be brought home to shelter, the hail will come down on them and they will die.” Yet, there were still those who left their animals in the fields! Why didn’t they act?

The פסוק gives us the answer:

שמות ט:כא: ואשר לא שם לבו אל דבר ה' ויעזב את עבדיו ואת מקנהו בשדה

The answer is that in their heads, they knew the truth – but their hearts were not impacted. There was a ‘clogged artery’ leading from their hearts to their limbs and actions. They were intellectually inspired and impressed with the truth, but it did not lead them to action. They were ‘frozen’.

An example of this phenomenon is seen, again, in יתרו. After קריעת ים סוף, all the nations of the world were stunned. Yet, only יתרו joined כולל ישראל as a result! Why? Let’s look carefully at the רש"י that we referenced earlier.

וישמע יתרו: מה שמוע שמע ובא? קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק

Yet, all the nations heard about the great miracles of ים סוף! What was the difference between יתרו and the others? Look carefully: what word does רש"י add? Not only did he hear – but also, ובא. He reacted. He did something about what he heard. He was not slow to react; he was not immobilized or sluggish. He acted. He responded. עמלק, on the other hand, reacted in the opposite way. Not only did they fail to have a *positive* reaction – i.e. worse than being *inactive*, they actually acted contrary to the inspiration that all the other nations felt.

Check for Understanding: Explain how an attitude of ‘so what’ prevents a person from taking action.

Finally, we said that cold temperatures prevent growth. Based on all the above, it is clear to us how an attitude of 'So what?' prevents a person from internalizing inspiration and taking action. Thus, it is a natural consequence that such a person will not be able to grow spiritually!

חז"ל state that: כַּת לְצַנִּים אֵינָם מִקְבְּלֵי פְנֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה. The category of scoffers – i.e. cynical, sarcastic people – will not be able to greet the שְׂכִינָה. Why? Based on our lesson, we can understand this חז"ל. Such people cannot internalize שְׂכִינָה; their very nature will not allow them to grow and internalize קְדוּשָׁה. Thus, by their actual makeup and personality, they are *incapable* of greeting the שְׂכִינָה!

Practice: Students should return to their original group formations. Each student should write a sample scenario that depicts their given 'influence of cold temperatures'. Then, students should read their scenarios aloud to their group.

Closure: Collect a few examples of 'So what?' scenarios, and then conclude: we have a מְצוּהָ to remember that which עַמְלֵק did, learn from their negative example, and eradicate their מַדָּה from our midst. How can we successfully raise our internal spiritual temperature?

- By letting go of this 'so what' attitude – by seeking inspiration and passion rather than coolness
- By being receptive to מוֹסֵר
- By paying attention to world events and seeking to take a message from them
- By acting immediately upon inspiration