

Vayayra 5775

BS"D Parashat Vayayra 5775

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BASIC NORMS OF SOCIETY

The Tanach was not meant by HaShem to be a highly emotional work that draws one to tears. Nevertheless, there are several graphic episodes which could certainly move one to empathize with the sorry situation of the individuals involved, where tears are not far away.

One of these episode appears in the Book of Shmuel 1, chapter 28.

The larger and more powerful Philistine army was in attack formation preparing for war against the weaker army of Israel.

King Shaul was in desperate need to connect to HaShem for direction in leading the nation at that frantic time. However, the traditional means whereby Shaul received divine instructions were no longer available. The Kohanim, through the Urim and Tumim (breastplate of the High Priest), did not succeed in communicating with the spiritual world. The prophets who surrounded Shaul did not receive any illuminations from HaShem, and worst of all, the great Shmuel, Shaul's mentor, confidant and teacher was no longer alive. Shaul was desperately alone.

The King, upon whose every word the army and nation were relying felt abandoned, deserted, and rejected.

In desperation, King Shaul turned for help to a most unlikely source. The Torah forbids, under punishment of death, dealing in real sorcery, including a psychic medium who could connect

with the dead.

During his reign, King Shaul in keeping with the Torah's directive, ordered the cleansing of the land of all persons who dealt in sorcery. However, now Shaul, in his desperation, sought out a psychic medium to raise the prophet Shmuel from the dead. The last clandestine medium in the land was found – the mother of Avner ben Ner, the chief of Shaul's army.

She communicated with Shmuel who was greatly agitated by what Shaul had done, and revealed to Shaul that he and his three sons were destined to die in this war, but they would merit a place in the world to come.

Shmuel, being the man of truth that he was in life, commenced to castigate Shaul for causing the loss of his monarchy and the difficult situation the nation was now facing. It was Shaul's misguided pity on Agag, King of Amalek, by sparing his life when the Torah commands the total annihilation of Amalekite, which as a nation had breached **all the norms of civilized humanity**, that led the world in hatred of Am Yisrael.

Indulgence and Leniency in a Judicial System

The Book of Shoftim (Judges) in chapters 19-20 relates one of the darkest episodes in Jewish history in the Holy Land – the saga of the concubine in the city of Geva, in the tribe of Binyamin.

A man and his concubine arrived in the city late at night. Since he did not know anyone there, they prepared to spend the night outdoors. A local elderly resident invited them to his home. While eating, several of the townspeople knocked at the door and demanded that the stranger be delivered to them for sexual purposes. The man offered to them his concubine

instead, to which they agreed. All that night they assaulted the woman and in the morning they threw her dead body in front of the door of the home where the man was staying.

He proceeded to dismember her body into 12 parts and sent one part to every tribe.

The nation was incensed at the conduct of the Benjaminites and demanded that the perpetrators be brought to trial. The leaders of Benjamin refused. The nation then rallied together to form an army of 400,000 fighters against 26,000 of Binyamin.

In the entailing civil war, the losses of the national army were over forty thousand fighters and the entire tribe of Binyamin was reduced to only 600 men!

Why did the entire Jewish nation go to war over the actions of a few perverted men, as despicable as they were?

I submit:

We find in our parasha a precedent for the decadent behavior of those few men; a precedent which caused in its wake the immediate destruction of the five infamous cities – Sedom, Amora, Adma, Tzevu'im and Tzohar.

The angels who had visited Avraham arrived at Sedom, and not knowing anyone in particular, stayed in the city square. Lot invited them to his home, as did the old man in the city of Geva. When word came around that Lot had violated a city ordinance prohibiting the hosting of strangers, the riffraff demonstrated in front of Lot's home demanding that he deliver the guests to them for sexual abuse; as did the criminals of Binyamin years later.

Lot offered the men his two daughters instead of the two guests, but his "generous" offer was refused. City ordinances must be observed, in the best tradition of Sedom.

The following morning, HaShem smote the five cities with sulfuric fire.

There were too many similarities between the transgressions of Sedom and the criminals of Binyamin, which aroused fear in the hearts of the other tribes.

The people of Sedom were law abiding citizens, but they were evil to the core. Their laws were immoral and ran counter to the basic norms of what HaShem requires from human society. One known law of Sedom, which was passed by their dually elected legislature, stated that a stranger had to be put on the infamous "bed of Sedom". If his feet reached past the bed, they were amputated, if too short, his body was stretched on the rack. It was legal, but sadistic as was the very nature of the people who legislated and abided by such laws.

The fear was aroused not by the criminals themselves, but by the refusal of the tribal heads of Binyamin to bring the perpetrators to justice. The indulgence and leniency of the judicial system of Binyamin in the face of such behavior had the potential of paving the way as a slippery slope for other Sedom like actions to become the accepted mores of that society.

So a decision was reached that it was imperative to terminate this blatant rejection of Jewish values even at the enormous cost of human life.

The Beginning of the End of Normal Society

The lesson to be learned from the above episodes is the most important in the lives of good people in today's world. For it contains within it the direction our world will be taking in the present and future.

The men of Israel went to war at an early stage of Binyamin's

decadence in order to prevent immorality from becoming the norm of society.

We are now witnessing the beginning of the end of normal society with the advent of aggressive Islam. Whereas Torah Judaism brings out the best in human beings, Islam brings out the worst and demented compulsions of primitive man. Their religiosity is a lie. For them God is no more than another weapon to be utilized in their trek towards world domination.

When our Prime Minister spoke at the United Nations warning the world of the dangers inherent in Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, he was saying, in effect, that Sedom and its four sister cities were toys compared to what the world will have to face if Islam in all its forms is not contained. The Prime Minister called upon the world to act now before it is too late, but he and we know that the call fell on deaf ears.

Our father Avraham prayed to HaShem to spare the evil cities if indeed there were even a small minority of righteous people. HaShem agreed because He knew that there was not even one Tzadik in all the cities. But history will prove that this world, with all its decadence, survived and will continue to survive only in the merit of the loyal Jewish people who cling to Hashem through the Torah in His Holy Land.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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