



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

י"ח מרחשון תשע"ט – יורא – 27th October 2018 - Volume 11 - Issue 16

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Chizky Salomon on the occasion of Eli's wedding to Ruthie Epstein which takes place in London on Sunday.

### Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush this Shabbos sponsored by Mr & Mrs Zev Ritvo on the recent birth of their daughter.

### Friday Night Shiurim

The winter season of Friday night Shiurim on the Parsha restarts this Shabbos. The Shiur takes place in the back Beis Hamedrash following davening.

### First Aid Course

There will be a first aid course for members of the Shul. The men's course is on Monday November 5th and the Ladies course Tuesday November 6th. Both take place in the Shul hall from 8.15 - 9.45pm. Further details on the notice wall.

### Clocks Change

Don't forget that the clocks go back one hour this Motzei Shabbos!

## Repetition, Hesitation and Deviation

Dani Epstein

On one occasion whilst attempting to convey a concept to my dearly beloved offspring, I employed the typewriter as a moshol. I forget what for, but vividly recall their complete mystification. They had no idea what a typewriter was. This was repeated when I did my best "scratched record" imitation which they mistook for rap. They had no idea what a record player was, and after attempting to convey the relationship between motor, tone arm, platter, record and groove unsuccessfully I simply resorted to my emergency "out" and demonstrated what I meant by repeating myself over and over again and again, over and over and again and again. If you count yourself amongst the younger members of the readership do not come to me to ask what either a typewriter or a record player is, there is a reason you have parents.

It is not the habit of the Torah to do likewise. By and large, most things fit into a few pesukim and we're standing around scratching our collective heads trying to figure out this stuff.

In which case, we ought to ask, why have we got three near identical stories? Noach's generation were naughty, and they got punished. Then the Dor Haflogoh, the Generation of the Dispersal, they were naughty and they got punished. Tada, so did Sedom. I think we might have gotten the message from the first story, so why do we get three?

Clearly there has to be a differentiator between these events that provide us some kind of insight,

so, let's see what we can find. Now, I know I'm about to deal with some midroshim here, but I'm wearing thick gloves and eye protection and I'm using a scalpel.

First let's examine what we know about the דור המבול - Generation of the Flood. Humanity had not turned to unbridled anarchy, since that results in everyone fighting everyone, then gang warfare. We have a lot of historical evidence as to just how hard it is to keep a true anarchy going, since people rapidly form alliances and groups in order to defence themselves and what we read about is something quite different. Society stuck to the letter of the law, but managed to find ways around it. They stole a very minimal amount that was not punishable. Furthermore, they engaged in avodah zorah which is not necessarily idol worship but anything not ordained by Hashem.

The result of this was unbridled licentiousness which has huge societal ramifications, along with a breakdown in trust. After all, it was every man for himself. As long as you weren't overtly breaking any civil or criminal laws, you

## לעלוי נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

ויקח חמאה וחלב וכו' הבקר אשר עשה ויתן לפניהם והוא עמדם: עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו

And he took cream and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and he placed [them] before them, and he was standing over them under the tree, and they ate.

If two people are eating together at one table, and one is eating meat and the other dairy, they have to place something between them to remind them not to share food with one another and possibly transgress the prohibition of eating milk and meat together.

There is a still unresolved machlokes about whether appointing a shomer to stand over the two people eating to make sure that they don't eat from each other's plates, is effective.

The Lev Aryeh, the Me'am Loez and more recently Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, point out that the Torah specifically stated that Avraham Avinu "stood over them". They suggest that by "standing over them", Avraham was actually acting as their self-appointed shomer.

were fine.

In this environment there is no possibility for society to flourish. Trust is a crucial element in every facet of our lives. No-one would use a bank, drive a car or eat anything unless they had a degree of trust that their money is reasonably secure, their and other cars on the road and their drivers are by and large safe and the farmers have not doused their produce with toxic amounts of pesticides. Once trust is lost beyond a safe degree getting it back is well nigh impossible.

If society has little reason to enforce stability in a situation where, for example, there is no fear of Hashem, then trying to function beyond a few generations will be impossible, as we see with the דור המבול. You can't form an alliance even with your neighbour if you have no way of trusting them. Unbridled mayhem will result, and humanity required a re-boot because the corruption had taken too deep a root. There was no way to recover, since the fragility of human civilisation is noted in Pirkei Ovos:

רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות, שאלמלא מוראה, איש את רעהו חיים בלעו - Rabi Chaninoh, the Deputy High Priest, says: Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear of it, man would swallow his fellow alive.

## The Week Ahead

### שבת פרשת יורא

זמן שבת	5.33pm
Mincha	5.38pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.25am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	Not this shabbos!
2nd Mincha	5.17pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following
Motzei Shabbos	6.37pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	4.25pm GMT
Late Maariv	8.00pm

This was researched quite thoroughly in 1962 when Professor Robert Axelrod at the University of Michigan, then a student at Northwestern University, set about modelling a winning strategy for the US during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He created a series of programs to test a more complex form of the Prisoner's Dilemma, a game theory concept designed to show why two completely rational individuals might not cooperate, even if it appears that it is in their best interests to do so. Space forces brevity upon me, but the essential outcome was that if everyone goes after everyone else relentlessly, Armageddon ensues. If, however, one retaliates in a measured manner, it is possible to survive. The upshot is, you need some kind of a system which can encourage civility if you simply want to survive, let alone enjoy life.

On to the דור הפלגה - Generation of the Dispersal. Where did they go wrong? They shifted from a simple nomadic life to an industrialised and agrarian society. Nothing evil in that, really, and they were not punished as such. No-one was killed, there were no natural catastrophes, but they failed in their primary directive of creating an equitable and just society by occupying themselves with the mundane, settling down and enslaving themselves to accruing wealth. With this came the injection of "jargon" by Hashem which accelerated their disbandment. Now nations started to form, and with that came all the ills that sectarianism breeds. Power structures and political hierarchies were established and armies built up. There was no true evil, but the simplicity and ethicality of their previous existence was lost.

Sedom and its twin city took things to an entirely new level. Initially people settled in the region because the place was just perfect for raising a family and herd. The land was rich and fertile, the weather was great and commerce flourished. Unlike the Generation of the Flood or Dispersal, Sedom and Amora were doing just fine when it came to law and order; crime rates were no different than anywhere else at the time.

This prosperity came at a price because it began to attract more people and as their fame spread the people of Sedom began to notice that they were having to deal with a dichotomy.

On the one hand, tourists and itinerant businessmen coming to the area were quite welcome for the commerce they fostered, however in their tow came people who were considerably lower down on the economic scale such as the indigent. This was a problem because now they had to deal with a momentous decision. What do we do about the poor and needy? In fact, this was very much a new problem that most of humanity had never dealt with previously at a societal scale.

What is very important to keep in mind is that the residents of the cities were law-abiding. The only thing was that these were laws they were creating themselves, and like every other society in the world, these were created for their own benefit which implies that their legal system was a reflection of their own morality and ethics as is any legal system.

Imagine if one will the debate that must have reigned in the ruler's chambers. On the one hand there were people arguing that their wealth was sufficient to accommodate the current numbers of poor people sleeping on the streets and that furthermore they had a moral duty to do so, regardless of the cost. On the other hand there were the NIMBYs who wanted these people out.

The observation was then raised that if Sedom started such a social welfare programme, they would attract more poor people who would have no impetus to contribute to the welfare of society, because they could live a reasonable life off the dole.

"More taxes!" was the rejoinder, but as Margaret Thatcher once observed: "The problem with socialism is eventually you run out of other people's money." On the far side of the room someone argued that unless these poor people were able to contribute to the economy they should be driven out. "What, even those born here?" asked the leftie whose social programme had just been shot down. "Yes, even the natives. If they can't contribute then they will simply sponge off the rest of us and then we all go broke." "We're hardly going to go broke, most of us are pretty loaded!" "Do the maths. It won't take all that long before we are flooded with poor families which we will have to house and feed and even if we all agree to subsidise on eggs-on-toast with baked beans we still won't be able to afford it."

Bearing in mind that they were all civilised (for a given value of civilised) and respected the law, so what they ended up doing was to enact laws that made being poor illegal. Now, this is a difficult trick to pull off. You can't simply tell people to become cruel and heartless and we observe from the medrash that clearly there were active dissenters who flouted the law in order to feed the starving, such the unfortunate girl who was covered in honey and left out to be stung to death.

The ruling elite were well aware what they were up against, so they carefully crafted a series of rules, regulations, ordinances and laws whose sum total was a de-facto exclusion of the unfortunates in society. Each one on its own was by and large fairly harmless; you may only drive luxury cars less than three years old, only designer clothing may be sold, everyone has to be a patron of

the arts. There was an argument to be made for each law. Luxury cars will break down less often and are better for the environment, but degrade from that status after three years. Buying cheap clothing means it does not last as long and is also bad for the environment, the arts are an integral part of any civilisation's culture and so on. There were probably hundreds of laws that had to be enacted, creating a spaghetti bowl of legislation that was so complex it had some unintended results as well.

A medrash illustrates the concept quite nicely. When Eliezer the Damascene, Avrohom's major domo, was bloodied during a visit to Sedom, he took his assailant to court. The judge ordered Eliezer to pay a medical fee to the attacker, since blood-letting was a popular medical procedure in those days. Eliezer promptly went outside, found a stone and smashed it into the judge's head and informed the hapless fellow that he can skip the middle man and pay the medical fee to the original assailant. Amusing as this little aside is, you can see just how quickly complex and fundamentally unjust law can be spun around in ways no legislator would have anticipated.

Sedom had gotten to the point where their legislation, all drawn up in their parliament, was so distorted that it was impossible to see reason any more; they were promulgating a completely debased and debauched lifestyle which meant that its society had degraded to the degree that in order to be a law-abiding citizen one was forced to be cruel, heartless and eventually evil. Anyone who was unable to live up to these standards was seen to be in violation of the law and treasonous, so they were shot at dawn for the sake of society as a whole.

Sounds a bit over-dramatic? As it happens, this is the road we are on at the moment. When James Damore, an engineer at Google, was fired for authoring a memo in which he explains that the low number of women employed by the firm had everything to do with pragmatic and personality differences between men and women and not gender bias, it kicked up a storm. It was entitled "Google's Ideological Echo Chamber" which reflects the societal and political straits Silicon Valley operates within.

His memo is hardly a scientific paper but much of what he discusses has some very firm correlations in psychology, anthropology and related sciences. There are fundamental differences between men and women. The former are more interested in things, the latter in people (software is more about "things" than "people"). Men are far more likely to be aggressive than women (men are better negotiators for pay rises). The list continues ad nauseam, but the point is this: whether he was right or wrong, or 40% correct and 60% off base, he was fired for expressing a view that was out of balance with the socialist views of the ironically quite capitalistic Silicon valley elite who have become the de-facto arbiters of right and wrong because no-one knows how to legislate a company when it decides what is and is not socially acceptable for the rest of the world.

This is but the tip of the iceberg. Professor Jordan Peterson, an otherwise complete unknown individual in the public sphere, was catapulted into the media circus after he steadfastly refused to kowtow to the Canadian Bill C-16 which inter-alia required him to address individuals by their "preferred pronouns" (Not a great deal of imagination required to understand what all that refers to). He argued this was coerced speech and stood his ground saying "If they fine me, I won't pay it. If they put me in jail, I'll go on a hunger strike. I'm not doing this. And that's that. I'm not using the words that other people require me to use. Especially if they're made up by radical left-wing ideologues." This struck a raw nerve and the activist lefties have done their utmost to unseat him while he has become the darling of conservative thinkers everywhere. He is the one who escaped (and made a fortune doing so, well done him), but having bearded the lion in its den his warnings about impending catastrophe have been prescient and almost prophetic.

Need any more examples? A new law was just passed by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government in Hungary that makes it illegal to sleep rough. This has sent shock waves through Europe's political community, but the Prime Minister claimed it was perfectly reasonable; Hungary has 11,000 shelter beds for the poorest of the hungry poor, so there is no need for them to sleep in the street which makes this all perfectly acceptable. Except for one tiny problem. There are 20,000 homeless people on the streets of Hungary. Now you see where this is going?

All three stories are warnings that if our moral axioms can evolve in different ways to suit the meme of the day, then mankind will descend into wanton destruction. We saw the dangers of every man for himself in the Dor HaMabul, we saw the divisiveness of the apparently harmless creation of "civilisation" with the Dor HaFlogoh. In Sedom we saw the menace of a legislation that banned the poor, defended every perversion and forced the populace to accept their dictat resulting in state-sanctioned evil. Now we get to see what all of that that looks like today. All three stories are in play right now, right across Western society and further afield.

They are banging on the gates, but are we prepared to stand our ground?