

Then there came the fugitive and told Avram, the Ivri. (14:13)

Avram *halvri*, the conjunctive name, Avram the *Ivri*, is found only once in the Torah. It defines our Patriarch as being on one side, the other side, alone against the world. An individual whose moral, spiritual and ethical compass stood in stark contrast to that of the entire world – and continues to do so until this very day. Some people need to be popular, to receive public accolades, to be surrounded by the crowds, to be accepted by everyone. We understand that public appeal and acclaim can be dangerous snares that might devour a weak person. They are willing to compromise under the guise of flexibility, bend and even pervert their principles in order to be accepted by those whose endorsement we should revile.

Avram *halvri* – “The entire world was (is) on one side; and he is on the other side” (*Midrash Rabbah Bereishis* 42:8). Two points can be gleaned from this statement: the world is against Avraham; Avraham is against the world. *Horav Moshe Neriyah, zl*, explains that Nimrod’s world, the world of hedonism and idol worship, was against Avraham. Also, the world of the King of Sodom, a world of Draconian justice, oppressive treatment of the weak and deprived, had Avraham in their crosshairs. He took on this harsh, cruel world which subjected innocent people to the most brutal punishment, just because they acted compassionately to strangers. Avraham fought them with kindness, teaching the world that cruelty was the antithesis of G-d’s Divine Plan. Nimrod and Sodom – neither one cared for Avraham – both wanted him out of the picture. Thus, he was alone, isolated from the world. His world revolved around Hashem. Their world was its antithesis. His descendants have learned (or should have learned) that we have no place within the world community. *Am levadad yishkon*, “A nation that will dwell in solitude” (*Bamidbar* 23:9). This is the only way. Unfortunately, not everyone can handle such a lifestyle. They require acceptance. Thus, they first acculturate and then assimilate, and they eventually outdo the Nimrods and Sodomites. When we breach the fence that should separate us, we demonstrate our insecurity and lack of pride, and then, ultimately, we become one with them.

In *Nifleosecha Asicha*, *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, quotes a meaningful analogy from a *Maggid*. The justice system in most civilized countries, such as the United States, is based on the skills (or lack thereof) of two lawyers: the prosecutor and defense attorney. Justice is not based upon proof, testimony, reality, but rather, on rhetoric, acting, sleight of mouth, illusion and delusion. In other words, truth does not always prevail. It is mostly a game of skill between two attorneys.

One time, an infamous criminal whose record spanned years, was finally apprehended and brought to trial. The prosecutor presented a brilliant case, citing each and every crime, describing it slowly, vividly, depicting the cruelty and greed of the criminal. He did a masterful job of presenting an airtight case for the prosecution. The criminal was going away for a few “centuries.”

The defense attorney was brilliant. He arose from his seat next to the defendant and faced the jury: “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my words on behalf of the defendant are superfluous, because, in five minutes, the real perpetrator of these crimes will enter this hallowed room.” He pointed to

the two large entrance doors and said, "In five minutes, those doors will open up and in will come the guilty one!"

The drama in the courtroom was incredible. The anticipation and excitement were palpable. Five minutes elapsed, and then five more minutes – yet no one walked through the doors. After half an hour, the defense attorney spoke again. "I have been watching each and every one of you. During this past half-hour, when you were all supposedly so certain that my client had perpetrated all of these crimes, you still could not avert your eyes from those doors. Why? Because you were not really sure that the real criminal would not walk in! If you were so certain of my client's guilt, why did you look at the door? Aha! You are not certain. Then you must acquit my client!"

The entire courtroom was in a state of shock and pandemonium. Finally, the room quieted down, and the prosecutor rose to address the court: "While all of you turned in your seats to glance at the doors, I kept my eyes glued on one person: the defendant. During this entire drama presented by the attorney for the defense, not once did the defendant turn toward the doors. Do you want to know why? It is because he knew quite well that no one was walking through the doors, because the guilty party was sitting right here." He pointed to the defendant and sat down.

Great story. Now for the lesson. First and foremost, we must thank Hashem for distinguishing us from the rest of the world. Our laws, based upon our Torah, separate us from the lost, misguided and confused people who search for a life of meaning and principle. We are so secure in our beliefs; we know for sure that our Torah is true and immutable, that we are like the defendant who never bothered looking up at the doors, because he knew the truth: no one was coming through the doors, because he was the criminal! Avraham *Halvri* stood alone against an entire world of confusion. They stared at the doors because they were misled by the guile and rhetoric of their convincing priests. We did not bother to look up, because we not only knew the truth – we were living it. I think it was *Horav Chaim Soloveitzick, zl*, who put *emunah*, faith, in Hashem in its proper perspective, when he said, "For the believer, there are no questions; for the non-believer, there are no answers." How true.