

Now the earth had become corrupt before G-d; and the earth became filled with robbery. (6:11)...The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose. (11:1)

Parashas Noach presents two cultures, both evil: one was destroyed; and the other was dispersed – but allowed to live. The generation of the Flood was destroyed. Although the people's sin was not so much directed Heavenward, their base immorality, lack of ethical character, and their licentious behavior earned them such ignominious repute that they had to be destroyed.

The generation of the Dispersal, however, worked together to build a world community, sow the seeds of a single culture with themselves in the leadership role. They had no room for G-d in their lives. *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 109a) distinguish between the *dor ha'Mabul* and the *dor Haflagah*. *Eilu lo pashtu yad b'ikar, v'eilu pashtu yad b'ikar*, "The former did not plan a rebellion against Hashem, the latter did." One may think that the sin which produced the *Migdal Bavel*, Tower of Bavel, was more egregious than the moral turpitude that prevailed during the generation of the Flood. Immorality trumps idol worship?

Chazal allude to this question and proclaim, *limdah*, this teaches, *she'sanui ha'machlokes v'gadol ha'shalom*. "How despicable is strife/controversy and how great is peace." The generation of the Flood consisted of quarrelers who constantly contended with one another. They had no respect for one another. The *dor Haflagah* were unified – perhaps in the wrong thing and for the wrong purpose, but, at the very least, unity reigned among them. *Gadol ha'shalom*, if people can get along, then Hashem allows them to live. When their peaceful endeavors "infringe" upon Heaven; when their unity produces a tower upon which they hope to ascend to spar with G-d – they are dispersed, not destroyed. *Machlokes*, divisiveness, controversy, is anathema even if it does not reach the Heavens.

Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl (quoted by *Horav Yissachar Frand*), asks how we can posit that love and harmony reigned during the generation of the dispersal, when *Chazal* relate that the builders were so obsessed with their tower that it took center stage in all their endeavors. To them, the loss of a brick was of greater concern than the loss of a human being. One who was carrying a brick up the tower slipped and fell, losing life and brick. The builders mourned the loss of the brick – not the life. If this is what peace is all about – keep it! Where is the abiding love and friendship that supposedly reigned in that society? Their *shalom* was at best superficial and based on ulterior motives. Is this form of *shalom* worthy of protecting these idol worshippers? Apparently yes – but why?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that even if people have their "differences," they do not see "eye-to-eye," or worse, their relationship has completely soured to the point that there exists a deep-rooted animus between them, the mere fact that they can work together to achieve a common goal is meritorious and considered *shalom*. It may be two-dimensional and shallow, but, for all intents and

purposes, if they can maintain a semblance of unity in working together, it is *shalom*. In other words, if the *shalom* is only surface-deep and temporary, but, for the present, people are talking and working together, it is still *shalom*.

If I may add, this is by no means the ideal concept of peace. *Shalom* is derived from *shaleim*, perfect, whole. Something that is superficially whole, but internally broken, is incomplete. *Shaleim* denotes total harmony, maintaining a complete accord between the external and inner aspects of things. All perfection is the realization of this idea. True peace is not fashioned only in an exterior mold. It must emanate from within, in harmonious accord with what is presented externally. Thus, one who claims to be at peace with others – but within himself he is beset with internal strife, ambiguity, self-doubt and depression – has not achieved peace.

At times, it is necessary to “disturb the peace” in order to achieve true inner peace. Pinchas did that when he demonstrated passivity in the face of a *chillul Hashem*, profanation of Hashem’s Name. This act represented the antithesis of peace. One must sacrifice everything for peace – even peace itself. One may never sacrifice the rights of others, nor may he sacrifice that which Hashem has declared to be good and true, for the sake of peace. To paraphrase *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, “There can be true peace among men only if they are all at peace with G-d.” Last, he who wishes to restore the peace which has been broken (through the seditious activities of those who live counter to G-d’s commandments) must himself be *shaleim*, whole, perfect, at peace with himself and with others.

The *kanai*, zealot, who disturbed the peace in order to create peace, the one whom Hashem attests was the paragon of peace, was Pinchas. As a result of his zealotry, he was blessed with *Brisi Shalom*, the Covenant of Peace.

In recent times (last century), *kanaus* of all forms has emerged as the mainstay and excuse for protesting the secular incursions that have undermined the sanctity of the soul of our Holy Land. This is not the forum for taking a position pro or con, but rather to characterize one of the premier *kannaim*, a holy man whose devotion to *Klal Yisrael*, Torah and *mitzvos* was unequivocal and without peer, *Horav Amram Blau, zl*. When *Rav Amram* saw *chillul Shabbos*, desecration of the holy *Shabbos*, he was in physical pain. He viewed this as a knife in the heart and soul of the Jewish People. Sadly, the secularists who offensively and publicly profaned *Shabbos* did not look at it this way. Having been, for the most part, raised on a diet of anti-Orthodox diatribe, they could not fathom how one of their own could be so connected to an ideal and culture; thus, as far as they were concerned, Orthodoxy was archaic at best, and extinct at worst.

Their attitude did not deter *Rav Amram* from standing on Kikar HaShabbos at the entrance to Meah She’arim and screaming, “*Shabbos! Shabbos!*” to protest the driver who was driving through this Orthodox enclave in open defiance of Torah law and in obvious disrespect of its inhabitants. This was not a new confrontation, and, every *Shabbos*, the protestors were violently beaten by the police, who would push and beat without mercy, making one wonder how brother could strike

brother with such vicious animus. This went on week after week to the incredulous reaction of the *chareidim*, Orthodox Jews, who wondered why and what was gained by the constant provocation. The *chillul Shabbos* continued unabated; the protestors were beaten with impunity and without remorse. Was it really worth it?

The simple answer would be: “When it hurts – one cries out” and *chillul Shabbos* hurts! Rav Amram, when asked this question by a distinguished Orthodox journalist and personality, replied with a powerful insight (one which we should all consider in our daily endeavor), “Tomorrow, the reporters are going to write that Amram Blau screamed, *Shabbos* and the police beat him in response. This report will be read by Jews all over the Holy Land. They will look at the pictures of *chareidim* lying on the ground, mercilessly being beaten by police – for what? For caring about *Shabbos*! Eventually, these pictures and reports will circulate to the news agencies and, ultimately, around the world. People will ask – what does this old man want? What is *Shabbos*? Why does it mean so much to them? Eventually (even) one Jew might decide to delve into *Shabbos*, its significance to the Jewish People, its sanctity and elevating effect on the entire Jewish mindset and psyche. Who knows – he might, as a result, become observant! This makes it all worth it.”

We now have an idea of how true *kanaus* leads to *shalom*.