



## The deconstruction of society

### A warning from the generations of the flood and the dispersal

The Halacha States that when two people agree on a sale of a movable object and the prospective buyer has already given the money, the sale is not final until the movable object has been lifted or pulled. Nonetheless if one of the parties is determined to back out at that point, **even though the monies will be refunded**, he still receives the following curse from Beis Din :

“He who has taken retribution from the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersal and the people of Sodom and Amora and from the Egyptians by the sea, He will take retribution from he who does not uphold his word” (Bava Metzia 48A – Choshen Mishpat 204)

There are two major questions:

First and foremost, what is so severely wrong about backing out of a commitment after giving/receiving money (and the sale still isn't final!!) that puts him somehow on even footing with the evils perpetrated by the generation of the flood who are guilty of theft and promiscuity, and the generation of the dispersal who banded together for evil purposes, and the cruelty of the people of Sodom and Amora, and Egyptians who were guilty of all of the above (as we will further explain)?

Furthermore, there is another incongruence. We're talking about an **individual** that backed out of a commitment (albeit it wasn't a legally-binding transaction but it was a commitment that was solidified with by the transfer of funds) and we are comparing him to **entire societies!** We

should compare him to a famous cheater like Lavan any other well-known villain. Why we comparing this **single individual** to **entire evil societies?**

The Mishnah (Avos 1:18) States: “... on three things the world exists: on **Justice** on **truth** and on **peace...**” Obviously by “world” the Mishnah doesn't mean the ecology. What it means by “world” is **Society**.

A Society needs to be held together by a common cause. Only truth is can provide common ideas that a society can be built on – **if you want it to last!** Societies built on false ideas or partial truths eventually fall apart (remember communism?).

Society needs peace! If people are not living in harmony they cannot live and bind together.

**Justice** is necessary for **law and order**. Without law and order there will be neither truth nor peace. Justice also passes judgment and resolves the “gray areas” of truth and peace

A society is something much greater than the sum of the individuals that comprise that Society. A society is a global movement that totally sweeps up the individuals, sets their mentality and values.

[On a deeper level, the unity that emerges with the formation of a society is siphoned from the attribute of G-d's Unity. This is why and all the prophecies for the future talk about “G-d being the one and only” and also about “world peace”. This is why the Jewish people who are G-d's

chosen have to always be in unity and not in the state of strife, just like our G-d is one. We say in the mincha service on Shabbos: “You are one, your name is one, and who is like your nation Israel **one nation** on Earth”. Meaning to say the nation of unity reflecting the unity of G-d and His name – Shelah HaKadosh - (see more on this below when we discuss the dispersal) ].

Therefore, if a society goes bad it’s a much greater evil then the misdeed of multiple people.

The **generation of the flood** is called precisely that: **an entire generation** – not just a lot of individuals. Their sins were so bad and rampant that the whole society crumbled, and needed to be erased. Their theft and promiscuity can be summed up as **lacking Justice**. Theft and promiscuity were rampant, there was no **law and order**. They were a very liberal society whose desires had No Boundaries. Rav Chaim Vital in his work “Shaaray Kedusha” teaches us that ‘desire’ comes from the ‘element of water’. Thus they were punished ‘measure for measure’ with **flood waters** breaking their boundaries and going beyond the oceans where they’re meant to be contained.

The **generation** of the dispersal were lacking in **Truth**. They created a fake idea for society to unite around: the idea of **the Tower**. The only real ideas to unite around are G-d and His Torah. Those are **Eternal Truths**.

Rav Saadiah Gaon has said: “our nation is a nation only by virtue of its Torah”. That’s why our nation will always be united and will endure forever because we’re held together and committed to a Timeless truth. The generation of the dispersal United around a fake idea, so G-d who is the ultimate truth disassembled that fake Unity.

The **people** of Sodom and Amora created an aggressive and cruel society totally lacking in kindness. If there’s no kindness you can be sure that there’s no **peace** and harmony! They were punished ‘measure for measure’. Rav Chaim Vital

in his work “Shaaray Kedusha” teaches us that the attribute of anger/aggression/cruelty is from the ‘element of Fire’ and that’s why they were consumed by **fire**.

The Egyptians were guilty of all of the above! They united around the idea of pharaoh as their God, they were as cruel as Sodom and Amora in the way they oppressed the Jewish people, and they were full of promiscuity! As the Torah says when it prohibits promiscuity to Jewish people (Vayikra 18:3) ‘like the actions of the land of Egypt... do not do...’. That’s why the Egyptians were punished by **both fire and water**. Fire rained down with the hail and ultimately they were drowned at the Red Sea, which is also mentioned in the curse of the Beis Din.

With all this in mind we can now understand the Halacha that we opened with.

Although this is just an individual disappointing a prospective business partner by breaking a commitment (that was reinforced with the transfer of funds – but still only a commitment) it is still a **violation of Truth!** This causes strained relations with the other party which is a **violation of peace!** The third element of **Justice, represented by the Beis Din**, kicks in and tries to make him stick with his commitment by reminding him: **“to you this may seem small, but you have to be aware that this type of behavior is capable of bringing down entire societies”**

Good Shabbos.



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