

PARASHAT VAYEIRA

FACING THE SOBERING REALITY

When the angels came to destroy Sedom, they asked Lot who his family members are? He says his wife, daughters and son-in-laws. They tell him to leave because there is nothing going to be left. He tells his son-in-laws to get out of there and they start laughing at him. The medresh says that there are parties going on in the street, and this is going to end? You're a fool! This is not going to end! This is not going to be destroyed. Lot runs away and his son-in-laws die. It's all going to be over soon, so let's have a party and have a good time. The same thing happened on the Titanic on April 14th 1910, the boat was sinking and the people were still partying. This is what the world thinks- do it all now because it's all going to end.

The Jewish view is totally the opposite. A person was made to get pleasure out of G-d in Olam Haba. The means to this end is in this world. We are in the hallway which leads to the ballroom. G-d plants eternal life inside of every Jew. Jewish life has meaning. Out of the 27 acts at Woodstock, 8 of them died from drugs. That is almost a full third of the people! When you see reality, it's sobering! We are not living for now. Shlom Hamelech says in the book of Mishle, "Hold fast to mussar, guard it, because it's your life." The Vilna Gaon says the reason we are alive is to break the bad middot that we did not yet fix. If you are not fixing them, what are you doing here if you're not strengthening yourself. The average American watches 87, 600 hours of television (10 years)!

Avimelech comes to Avraham, why did you lie to me and tell me she was your sister? You almost got me killed! Avraham responds, "Only because there is no fear of G-d here, you would kill me for my wife." Everyone here is a good person but if you don't have G-d, who sets morality, then anything goes. Rav Elchonon Wasserman asks, why does it say "**only** because there is no fear"? You can be a good person but without yiraat shamayim, anything goes. Because even in a civilized society with good people it is not enough. (Holocaust). Rav Yitzchak Hutner said that before the war he was in the Slabodka Yeshiva. There was a guy who went to Berlin to learn by Rav Dovid Zvi Hoffman. When he comes back, all the people on the yeshiva ask him what he thought of the Germans? He said they were all very polite and anytime they would say something, they would ask if they were correct. ("Am I not correct?") So a fight broke out in yeshiva whether you can praise the Germans or not. Rav Hutner said you cannot praise them, and there was this yeshiva bachor who was totally against his opinion. Years later, Rav Hutner was sitting in his Yeshiva Chaim Berlin and the same guy who argued with him

came to Rav Hutner and tells him that he was right. You know why? “When the Germans cut each one of my fingers off from the knuckles, they would ask after each one if it hurts”. (“Does it hurt?”)

When your bottom line is not G-d, then all bets are off. In 1883 the first graduating class of reform Rabbis. They served little neck clams and shrimp at the graduation. 100 years later they tried to do a reunion of the descendants of these “rabbis”. They couldn’t find any left that were Jewish! You cut corners and that’s what happens. There is no Hebrew word for ambivalence, but there is a musical note “shalshelles” anytime there is unsureness. For example, Eliezer was trying to get a wife for Yizchak’s son but he wanted to give him his own daughter, he didn’t really want to find anyone. Yosef, when he was sold by his brothers was very lonely and wanted to be with someone (Potiphar’s wife), but he came from Yaakov who was holy and he couldn’t do it. Same thing with Lot, he really didn’t want to leave. Do you have ambivalence about being an Orthodox Jew, or are you going to be like Avraham Avinu and make sacrifices- be moser nefesh?