

AN ACCOMPLICE TO EVIL

by Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier

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"The sons of Yaakov came upon the corpses of the city that had defiled their sister." Bereishis 34:27

Shechem, the son of Chamor, set his sights on Dina. He carefully laid a trap to entice her out of her tent, and then kidnapped and defiled her. When Yaakov and his sons heard what had been done, *"they were extremely distressed . . . [and said] 'So shall not be done!'"*

Shechem became infatuated with Dina, and came to ask for her hand in marriage. "Name your price and I will pay it," he said to Yaakov. The brothers of Dina answered Shechem, "To marry into our family, a person must have a Bris Milah." Shechem and Chamor agreed, and they convinced the people of their town to be circumcised as well. On the third day of their Milah, Reuvain and Shimon took up their swords and killed out every male in the city.

After they were finished, the posuk says, *"the sons of Yaakov came upon the corpses of the city that had defiled their sister."* The Siforno is bothered by the expression *"the city that defiled their sister."* After all, it was Shechem alone who committed the act, not the city.

The Siforno answers by explaining that in that society, forcibly taking a woman was not considered abhorrent. If it had not been socially acceptable, Shechem never would have done it. Therefore, it is considered as if they were all participants.

The problem is that the Siforno doesn't seem to have answered his question. Granted the entire town may have been responsible for creating the social atmosphere that accepted such conduct, but all they did was to give Shechem the opportunity to act as he wished. They didn't join him in the act. They didn't aid him. They didn't tempt him to do it. The most we can blame them for is giving the opportunity to Shechem to do as he chose. If so, how can the posuk say the *city* defiled Dina?

A cog in the wheel of a killing machine

On April 14, 1944, the deportation of Hungarian Jewry began. Within 56 days, almost 500,000 men, women, and children were transported to Auschwitz for their *final solution*.

Imagine that you were a German train switch operator at a station near Auschwitz. You came of age at a time when Hitler had been long accepted as the Fuehrer. From your youth, you were

indoctrinated with the belief that the fatherland was the glory of all true Germans, and that Hitler alone was the savior of the new Germany.

It would be hard for you to deny your knowledge of where this human cargo was headed, as the air hung heavy with the smell of burning flesh. But you never killed anyone. In fact, you may not even have completely bought into the racial theory thing. Your job was just to keep those trains rolling. So you aren't guilty of murder. Are you?

At the Nuremberg Trials, the Nazis defended themselves with the mantra, "We were only following orders." Each participant denied his guilt by claiming he was just a cog in the wheel – not a murderer himself, not a decision-maker – just a lackey. Yet, even the secular world didn't accept this because being a cog in the wheel of a killing machine makes you a part of a machine that kills. As such, you are a killer.

The Siforno is teaching us that even if a person is not an active participant in an act, he can be considered responsible for its happening. In a normal society, basic human rights are a given. If the society has failed to keep safeguards in place, then that society has failed in its most basic responsibilities. Every member of that group is therefore held accountable for that failure.

In the case of Dina, the townspeople made it possible for Shechem to do what he did. Without their easing the standards, it never would have happened. Once they lowered the accepted behavior, they paved the way for him, so they are held responsible for what he did.

A perspective on Mumbai

This concept is especially relevant in our times when the murder of innocent people has become an accepted manner of protesting for one's political rights. Inflicting terror on men, women, and children is almost part of the political process – because it advances *my* cause.

And who is to blame? Certainly in a society that fosters such beliefs, every member of the society is guilty. When a mass murderer has succeeded in his wanton killing, and his hometown comes out *en masse* to celebrate, that town is a participant in the murder. If a culture encourages the brutal torture of civilians by teaching it as an expression of religion and a "*beautiful thing*," then every member of that group shares responsibility for the outcome. If the National Palestinian Authority TV programming regularly shows messages of hatred that promote murder and self-mutilation, then the TV anchors, the actors, the scriptwriters, the camera men, and all of the support staff are part of the crime.

However, the guilt doesn't end there.

Let CNN be the Judge

The first and primary role of government is the protection of its people. That is self-evident – unless the population is Jewish. In that case, self-preservation isn't a given, it is deemed amoral.

While it is unclear who empowered the media to be the judge and jury on issues of morality, judge they do. Their bias is clear in every report of the so-called peace process and "*liberation*" attempts.

Every CNN reporter who through his perverse version of social consciousness excuses away murder as a justified expression of "Arab anger and humiliation" becomes a willing accomplice with acts of terror. By creating a world order that condones the killing of Jews, they become accomplices to the very acts they are reporting. While they haven't pulled the pin on 20 kilos of explosives, their words have created the social climate that encourages this, and as such, they are guilty.

Every media outlet whose bias and prejudices condemn Israel for defending itself makes it more acceptable for global terrorism to go on unchecked, allowing and encouraging more of the same.

The events that we are suffering through, and the clear obstruction of truth that enables them, are but one last stage of our long and bitter exile. May HASHEM speedily redeem us.

For more on this topic please listen to Shmuz #182 - Tolerating Evil

Rabbi Shafier is the founder of the Shmuz.com – The Shmuz is an engaging, motivating shiur that deals with real life issues.

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