

Dvar Tora

Komunismus nebo kapitalismus?

V dnešní paraše nám Tóra představuje společenský model, který kombinuje výhody obou „světonázorů“. Šest let se člověk může namáhat a jeho námaha má smysl, protože jak píše Tóra: Budete jíst plody své práce, ale sedmý rok je rok, kdy půda leží ladem a veškerá úroda je skutečně všech. Tento rok padají první sociální rozdíly. Všichni mají stejnou stravu. Nejen to, všechny dluhy jsou sedmý rok smazány. A při Jovelu - padesátý rok - se veškerá půda vrací zpět původním majitelům či jejich dědicům. Padesát let „volné soutěže“ střídá jeden rok skutečné rovnosti. Člověku je dána možnost aktivně ovlivňovat svou finanční a společenskou situaci, přesto je zachována pojistka, která zabraňuje povýšit peníze na cíl veškerého chování. Stále si musíme připomínat, že existují hodnoty, které se nedají vyčíslit jejich „tržní cenou“. (Rav Jaron Ben David)

Rav Sacks: The Dignity of Difference

When the world out there is changing faster than the world in here.

Whatever our view of the nature and prehistory of mankind, we are not made for constant change at this ever-accelerating pace. Maimonides points out that ‘man, according to his nature, is not capable of abandoning suddenly all to which he was accustomed’. That, he argues, is why the generation Moses led out of slavery were, with two exceptions, not destined to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land. That was left to their children, born in freedom (as the Jewish folk-saying puts it: It took one day to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but forty years to take Egypt out of the Israelites). What distinguishes homo sapiens from other species is the degree to which our behaviour is passed on across the generations not by genes but by culture, allowing for much more rapid and conscious adaptation to environmental and other kinds of change. We are, par excellence, the learning animal. Even so, the spiritual and moral history of mankind (the abolition of slavery, the recognition of human rights, the abandonment of prejudice) has been painfully slow. Adaptive we may be, but we are not made for constant, relentless alterations in our living conditions.

That is what we now face at ever-increasing speed. It took thirty-eight years for radio to reach fifty million users in the United States. In the case of computers it took sixteen years. The Internet reached fifty million users in four years. Computer power doubles every eighteen months and shows no sign of slackening. The Internet doubles every year. The number of DNA sequences we can analyze doubles every two years. A huge gap has opened up between the transformations happening around us and our ability to respond. Early in the twentieth century William Ogburn coined the concept of ‘cultural lag’ – a state, like now, in which material culture, such as technology, is being transformed faster than non-material culture such as modes of

governance and social norms. When the world out there is changing faster than the world in here – in our mental and emotional responses – our environment becomes bewildering and threatening. Societies take time to change. So do people.

In 1994 I was making a television documentary about the family. During the course of my research I came across a woman who had developed a pioneering approach to the cure of stammering among young children. She was using the family as a therapeutic unit. Her view was that dysfunctional behaviour was often reinforced by family relationships, and that if she was to cure the children she had to work with the parents as well. As part of her programme she asked the parents to think of the most precious object they owned. For some it was a wedding ring, for others a family heirloom, but for all of them it was an item invested with deep emotional attachment. Then she told them to imagine losing it, and asked them to describe their responses. They varied from panic and shock to deep sadness and bereavement. Then she said: ‘Now you know what it will feel like for your child to lose its stammer.’

It was a moment of utter bewilderment. Until then the parents had all assumed that their child wanted to be able to speak normally. Their stammer impeded their social life. It made things difficult for them at school or among friends. It was, in short, a dysfunction. What the therapist wanted the parents to understand is that a dysfunction can sometimes be less fearful than change itself. We get used to our disabilities and build them into our relationships. They become familiar, part of our world, integral to our self-image, and the hardest thing can be to let go. Change, even change for the better, can be disorienting, threatening, traumatic. That is why the twenty-first century, with its non-stop transformations, will be deeply unsettling.

