

### ***Think Again – England going up in flames***

*What is happening to democracy, to our civil democratic way of life? How is it that a modern and sophisticated society such as England can descend so quickly into chaos? What are the causes that led to the riotous events this past week in England? Can the breakdown in society be attributed to what has been discussed in the media, the imbalance in economic status between rich and poor? Is it envy or greed? Here in Australia the CBA announces a 6 billion rise in profits in the same week that every Australian lost money on the CBA due to the drop in share price. Perhaps the causes relate to religious and ethnic polarisation within our democracies.*

*Can English street riots happen here in Australia? Remember the Cronulla riots.*

*What is apparent however is that there are some glaring weaknesses in our democratic society and they are being played out in front of our eyes on the Television screens. The democratic right of free speech, the right of protest can quickly turn to ugly scenes and even death. The democratic right of freedom of religion can spread to religious neighbourhood warfare. The democratic civil liberties of the left quickly can turn to jealousy and looting. So what are the root causes?*

*I believe that western democracies are failing because we are afraid to teach values. Western democracies espouse rights and freedoms, pluralism, equality and tolerance. Yet we do not champion morals ethics and values. We are fighting hard to search for our democratic soul. Yet we are afraid to espouse the basic Jewish value that a human being is endowed with the Godly character to make good choices. The human species are capable of choosing between good and bad. A human being can make the moral choice of right and wrong.*

*When people destroy property or life or use guns and incite violence, it is not because they are poor or ethnically and religiously marginalised it is because they have not made the choices. It is because they have not chosen good basic values. Rabbi Gourarie this week spoke in Synagogue on How to diffuse tension within the family (extend that to the world). He spoke about two opposing values and both are right. He spoke about the value of justice or being indignantly right and the value of peace. You may be right and win an argument but you won't have peace. You may have peace but you won't have justice.*

*I believe that there is another important value to publicize. This is the value of education and to teach your children. Coincidentally we find this value in this weeks Torah reading. V'etchanan 6:7 "And you shall teach these things to your children when you sit in your house when you go on the road when you lie down and when you arise". Sharing values with your children and knowing where they are when it is dark outside will rekindle the spark of the democratic soul.*

*as always  
good shabbos and see you in shule  
Elozer Gestetner*