

Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Old habits die hard. Cadre deployment follows a certain logic – “we appointed you, so you must think as we think”. This attitude hardened into practice – like no secret votes in parliament and no independent candidates running for parliament. Times are changing.

Thuli Madonsela is not sanctioned for questioning how fair it is to punish “Gogo Dlamini” for alleged violations of “Covid-1984” protocols. But when Mogoeng Mogoeng asks some deep and penetrating questions about our government’s policy on Israel, he is demonized.

I remember Mashele and Qobo’s book The Fall of the ANC, written soon after Polokwane. They divided the ranks of the ANC into two groups. First were the “vindictive triumphalists” and quite clearly this tendency has not been entirely laid to rest as of yet. Then there were the “soul-battered mourners” and I think this distinction is still relevant. Mogoeng has been singled out – for expressing a dissenting opinion - and now a complaint has been filed against him with the JSC.

This is not just about freedom of expression, it is about freedom of thought. Are we all expected to buy into ANC “group-think”? Do you have to join another political party when you disagree with the ANC? Is there no room for dissent within its ranks?

When God heard about the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, he decided to investigate first, before taking any punitive action. On his way to the city, he visited Abraham’s ranch and warned him what the consequences of his investigation might be. Abraham was hospitable to his guests, then he blurted out a cheeky question: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

He negotiated with God and God was flexible. God was not above negotiation.

Wasn’t it the ANC that manoeuvred around a court order, to arrange an escape route for ex-president Al Bashir of Sudan? They scooted him out of South Africa based on alleged diplomatic immunity, and went on to threaten to pull out of the International Criminal Court. This was a diversion, but the whole episode suggested that some in the ANC are contemptuous of the courts. Al Bashir has since been apprehended, and does face multiple charges of crimes against humanity.

I watched the podcast hosted by the editor of the Jerusalem Post, in which the Chief Justice made his remarks. Mogoeng went far out of his way to preface his remarks, noting that they were not in line with prevailing ANC government policy, and thus spoken as a private citizen who begs to differ. His position was well articulated and explained.

He asked why a country that had never harmed South Africa is treated so harshly, when countries that colonized South Africa, doing us much harm were now on good terms with us? I could certainly follow the logic of his probing. As a man of peace, he longs to be on good terms with everyone.

Then suddenly the ANC threw all the toys out of its crib and reverted to “vindictive triumphalism”. Frankly this has more to say about the ANC than it has to say about Mogoeng Mogoeng. If anything, perhaps the ANC should eat some humble pie and review its hostility towards Israel?

Not even God is above negotiating with his friends.

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