

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת בשלח

Learning to Love All Types of Jews

ONE NATION UNDER G-D

We all know already that the children of Yaakov were in *Mitzrayim* for two hundred and ten years and it was there that this small family of twelve brothers developed into one great nation. And because they didn't have any territory to divide among themselves; they were primarily in the area of *Goshen* and couldn't spread out and settle into separate districts, we would have therefore expected that they should have lived together as one people, the *Am Bnei Yisrael*. *L'havdil*, like they say in America, "One nation, under G-d." That's what *we* would have anticipated.

And yet, what do we see? That the developing nation of the children of Yaakov remained *twelve separate shevatim*. For more than two centuries they maintained the boundaries; everybody knew his *shevet* and identified primarily with his own tribe. Everyone knew where he belonged. For two hundred years they didn't give up their individual identity. Yehudah remained Yehudah, Reuven remained Reuven, and Shimon was Shimon. And that's a remarkable thing because it was in *Mitzrayim* that they were supposed to grow into *one* unified nation. And therefore we should study that; it's a strange thing and it deserves a great deal of attention.

THE GHETTO OF 1776

Imagine that for two hundred and ten years Jews lived in America. Let's say, in 1776 some Jews came to America from Germany and others came from Spain. Some immigrated from England and the Turkish Jews also arrived on the shores of America. So by the time two hundred and ten years would pass, by the time 1986 would come, *halevai* they should still remain Jews! But that they should remain segregated into strict boundaries, separate people, living separate lives?! Such a thing couldn't even be imagined! It's one nation and the different families and nationalities would all be amalgamated after a while. They would merge together and the boundaries would disappear. And why not? After all, we're all Jews, one tribe of *ovdei Hashem*. And yet we see that in *Mitzrayim* it wasn't like that. Not only did they remain Jews, but they retained their status as separate *shevatim*.

So you'll say maybe it was something temporary, something reserved for their stay in *Mitzrayim*, when they were still a growing family of different brothers, and not yet a unified nation. But when they would come out of *Mitzrayim*, so now they're a full-fledged nation already, so who needs this segregation anymore?

THE SPRINGS OF SEGREGATION

And yet surprisingly, what we find is that this was the permanent plan of *Hashem* for the *Am Yisroel*; it was His conspicuous policy to maintain the individual identity of each tribe. We see that Hakadosh Baruch Hu insisted there should be separate *shevatim* even when they came out of *Mitzrayim*. We find that in our *parsha*: **ויבואו אילמה ושם שתים עשרה עינות מים** - "And they came to Eilim and there were twelve springs of water...and they encamped there near the water" (Beshalach 15:27). Now if the Torah goes out of its way to tell us the number of springs, then the number twelve is not superfluous. Twelve springs?! That wasn't an accident; that was Hashem's plan from the days of *ma'aseh Bereishis* - they didn't dig the springs on their own. This was the hand of Hashem guiding His people in the way He wanted for them.

So we'll understand that the springs of much needed fresh water in the parched desert was the preferred place for people to gather. Everyone needs water after all. And therefore there is no doubt that it was the plan of Hashem to have separate springs for each of the twelve *shevatim*. The plan of Hashem was segregation.

The *Reuveinee* should spent their time with the *Reuveinee*, the *Shimonee* with the *Shimonee* and so on and so forth. And we're told about it; the separation is emphasized. More than emphasized; Hakodosh Boruch Hu made sure that it would remain that way *always*.

ARE WE REALLY "KE'ISH ECHAD"?

Because when you learn Torah, if you pay attention to the *pesukim*, you'll note that this wasn't an isolated incident; it was no aberration. You see a very clear thing that this is how the *Am Yisroel* always lived in the ancient times- as distinct and divided *shevatim*.

You remember when they came to receive the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. Everyone knows what the Torah says: ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר - "And the nation encamped there, opposite the mountain" (Shemos 19:2). And Chazal are bothered by the word *vayichan* - and he encamped, in the singular. And they say that the nation made camp כאיש אחד בלב אחד - "Like one man, with one heart" (Rashi, *ibid.*)

However even there we find something very queer. They all encamped together "like one man, with one heart," and yet Moshe Rabeinu, *al pi Hashem*, had different plans for them. When they were about to receive the *Torah*, it says (Shemos 24:4) that Moshe built twelve *matzeivos*, one for each one of the twelve *shevatim*. ויבן מזבח - תחת ההר ושתים עשרה מצבה לשנים עשר שבטי ישראל - Moshe built - not one *mizbei'ach* at the foot of the mountain, but he built *twelve matzeivos* for each one of the *shevatim* separately!

That was what Hakodosh Boruch Hu insisted on at *kabalas hatorah*. Twelve separate "standing stones." Now that's very strange. Why was it necessary? They're all coming to receive the *Torah* together "like one man, with one heart." What's the problem with that? Let them come together as one nation!

I'll tell you something else that always bothered me. You know that the *kohen gadol* carried always on his chest the *choshen*, the breastplate. And on the breastplate he had twelve precious stones, each one distinguished from the next; separate colors, set off from each other in separate settings. And on these twelve precious stones were engraved the names of the twelve *shevatim*. והאבנים תהיין על שמות בני ישראל שתים עשרה על שמותם... איש על שמו תהיין לשני עשר שבט - "The stones should be according to the names of the Bnei Yisroel, twelve according to their names... each man by his name

they should be, for the twelve tribes” (Shemos 28:21). That's what Hashem wanted to see - that in the *Mishkan* each *shevet* should remain separate.

And it wasn't just the symbolic *choshen* in the *Mishkan*. It was actually how they lived their lives in the *midbar*! They lived in separate areas, under different colored flags, each one distinguished from the next. They lived and traveled for forty years segregated from one another - set boundaries, this *shevet* here, this one here. There were no walls but there were always clearly defined boundaries.

HASHEM WANTS STRONG BORDERS

And a bigger *kashah*; even when they came to *Eretz Yisroel*, they should have become one great nation. But no. There were twelve tribes, and each one got a separate territory. That's a queer thing. Throughout all the generations the fact that they lived apart, within separate boundaries, caused them to have separate lifestyles. They all kept the Torah but each one had *minhagim* that were different. *Anshei Galil* had this *minhag*, *anshei Yehuda* a different *minhag*. There were different traditions and separate *minhagim*, and in the course of time many things became very deeply ingrained in them. It was like twelve different nations within one people. And for me, that's really a very big *kasha* - why did there have to be separate *shevatim* when they settled down permanently in *Eretz Yisroel*?

Now *lehavdil elef havdalos* when the English first came to America so they settled here and there; they settled in Massachusetts, and in Connecticut and Virginia. Not because of any reason that they wanted to remain separate; that's just how it came about. One colony settled here, one there. And after they settled, so in order to manage the collection of taxes, so the head government in England, divided them into states. In each state there was a tax collector, and they had separate offices for each state. But it was for the sake of convenience - not because there was any real difference between the states. They were all the same. All the *goyim* are the same. Now it could be that in the course of time they developed certain dialects, certain differences, but *lechatchilah*, at the beginning they had no intention of being different people. But *lehavdil elef havdalos* here it was *al pi Hashem*. The land was divided according to the command, the will, of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He wanted His people to be separate.

I don't know if it bothers you but it bothers me very much. Now why didn't they say we should all unite and be one people? Let's all be one people now. Why should we be broken up into twelve different tribes? Why did they need twelve *shevatim*? They came out of *Mitzrajim* and now they're *am echad*. They're one nation. Why keep separate *shevatim*? And to my little head, that's a very big question. Why couldn't it be one country? That's what we would do if it would have been our little *seichel* making decisions.

EVERYONE BRINGS SOMETHING TO THE TABLE!

Now we have to understand; there are no accidents in this world. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has planned these things that way- and it's a puzzle. And so we'll try to understand why is that, what is the purpose of Hashem over here?

And so we'll say as follows: It's clear to us that the purpose of maintaining the individual status of each *shevet* is because *each tribe possessed its peculiar characteristics*, which were its contribution to the general perfection of the *Am Yisroel*. And Hakadosh Boruch Hu insisted that each *shevet* should maintain its identity, and thereby contribute to the general perfection of the *Am Yisroel* as a whole.

We get so many benefits from each *kehillah*, because each group of frum Jews brings something else to the table, some benefit for the *Am Yisroel*. Our nation wouldn't be the perfect nation it is, if it wasn't for the variety of paths in the service of Hashem that make up our people. And that's exactly why Hakadosh Boruch Hu insisted on the twelve springs in *Eilim*. Because those separate springs signified Hashem's plan to encourage each tribe to maintain its individuality. As they came to draw the much needed water, each tribe frequented its own well and was therefore able to avoid being swallowed up by the others. Each group retained their individual identity.

Now you have to know that the differences among the *shevatim* was a model for what would persist throughout the entire history of the *Am Yisroel*. Even when some the *shevatim* went lost, or became diluted one among the other in *golus*, we always remained a nation of different tribes; different ideals and attitudes, various preferences of paths in the service of Hashem.

WHO NEEDS CHASSIDIM, MISNAGDIM AND SEFARDIM?

I'm frequently asked: What's the benefit of different types of servants of Hashem? Who needs *chassidim* and *misnagdim* and

sefardim? Wouldn't it have been better if we all walked together on one path towards Hakodosh Boruch Hu?

So I always say: Why is it that you'll find in the supermarket clover honey and orange blossom honey and buckwheat honey? There are at least ten varieties of honey! Who needs it?! And the answer is that it makes life more delectable! Variety is a pleasure! After all, Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have given us nothing but red delicious apples. Let's say you'd pass a fruit stand and all you would see is bins and bins of red delicious apples. Now, red delicious apples are a treat; we can't complain about them, but how much more fun it is when we have ten different kinds of apples! And even better, to have tens and tens of varieties of fruit. It's much more fun when you can choose from a wide variety of good things.

And therefore, there are all kinds of methods of serving Hashem, each one that has been cultivated by Hashem Himself, by the separation of *kehillos*. Sometimes a person can choose one method and stick to it always. Or sometimes you can choose from the fruit store of the different *shevatim*. Sometimes you'll choose something from the *Gerrer*, another thing you'll take from Lakewood, something you'll pick from Lubavitch, something you'll take from Belz, and something else you'll nosh from Satmer. And so on. Every *shevet* had something to contribute. You can be sure that there are a lot of delightful fruit in all of these various places that help the *Am Yisroel* in its *avodas Hashem*.

Everybody is helping out! Some *kehillos* brought to the *Am Yisroel* the great benefits of *mussar* to the *Am Yisroel*, while other *kehillos* brought *chassidus*. From some communities we learn to be *kanaaim* for the truth and others impress us with their *hasmadah* in *limud hatorah* or *gemillas chasodim*. I myself have learned from one group of Jews in Flatbush what it means to be *michabeid talmidei chachomim*. Because there's no end to the variety of paths that the *Am Yisroel* walk toward the One Hashem and there's what to learn from everyone.

MAKING ENEMIES FOR RAV MILLER

Now I'm not going to tell you what's best. Someone asked me, what does Hakodosh Boruch Hu want from me? Am I supposed to be *chassidish*, or *litvish* or what? Now that's some big order. He wants me to make enemies, the one who asked me that question.

Hashem wants you to be the best that you can be. Some people can be their best if they're *chassidish*. Some people can be their best if they're *litvish*. Other people can be their best if they're *sefardi*. It's like asking - "What is the best diet for all of mankind?" The best type of diet depends on each individual person. People are different. Some people are so different that their diets are radically different. So whatever it is that you choose, you should make it a principle in your life to always choose whatever it is that will *give you the most success in life* - and success in this world means preparing for the Next World.

EVERYONE IS WRONG

Everyone is right. And everyone is wrong. Nobody is perfect in this world. And most important is to live with the principle of knowing that we ourselves are not altogether right. And we have to do our best to improve. Although we don't have to adopt what everybody else does, and everyone should follow the customs and manners of his *kehilla* in the very best manner, nevertheless, he should know that there are things to be learned everywhere.

Even though you're a *chossid*, when you walk into Telshe Yeshiva, you can learn good things there too. And if a Telshe bocher goes to Williamsburg, he can learn good things there, no question about it. Therefore, everyone should try to steal from others all the good things they can. Instead of going around and saying "Well, I saw in this *shteibel* that they talk during davening so it's not so bad." Or, "In the other place they daven fast, so I can also daven fast." So this person goes around collecting all the *wrong things* from all the places. No! Go around collecting all the good things from everybody - that's what they're there for.

BE JEALOUS AND STEAL

And that's the person who will succeed. That's what jealousy is for. *Kinah* means to be *koneh*, to acquire, to be jealous of all the good things that you find. "Why is he saying a long *shemonah esrei* and not me?" "Why does he treat his wife so nicely and I'm so gruff?" "Why does he go out to learn at night and I'm still wasting away?" And everybody should try to steal from everyone else all the good things that they find.

That's our purpose - to acquire all the qualities that find favor in the eyes of Hashem. Because what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants of

us is *shleimus* - perfection. *Shleimus* in knowledge of the Torah, perfection in knowing His ways, perfection in recognizing Him in history and in nature. Perfection in character and self-control and perfection in kindness to our fellow man. Every form of perfection that's possible for a person to emulate, to imitate, to steal from all sides, he should do that. And the various groups that make up the *Am Yisroel* have all of those things to offer.

And so whenever a person comes into contact with people different than himself, other *shevatim*, other *kehillos*, whenever he sees anything good in the world, he should recognize that these differences are exactly what Hashem was cultivating in the *Am Yisroel* when He separated the *shevatim*. And therefore he should emulate whatever good he sees and decide that he wants to take it for himself.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN IS TOO SMALL

However there is another subject altogether - maybe even more important - that is vital for understanding why Hashem insisted on the separation of the *shevatim*. And we'll begin this subject with the following *gemara*. The *gemara* (Brachos 58a) says that **הַרְוֵאָה אוֹכְלוּסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, if you see a big throng of Jews, you have to make a special *brachah*. What's called *uchlusei yisroel*? 600,000 Jews. It's a *zechiyah*! We're talking here about Jews who are *shomrei Torah*. 600,000 *shomrei Torahs*! Ahh! It's an illumination of the mind, it's such a *simcha* that you're required to make a *brachah* on something like that.

Now in that *brachah* you mention a number of things. And among the things you say in that *brachah* is that **אֵין דַּעְתָּם דּוּמָה זֶה לְזֶה** - **וְאֵין פְּרָצוּפֵיהֶן דּוּמִים זֶה לְזֶה** - In this big throng, no two of them have the same faces. It's a remarkable statement. The fact is that nobody has an exact replica of your face. Even twins are not exactly the same. And that's only the *chitzoniyus*. Because even more than that, no two people have the same *deios*, the same minds. People have various characters. Even *tzadikim*; no two *tzadikim* are the same. They think differently. When it comes to **דַּעְתָּם**, their ideas, their attitudes, it's a remarkable thing, that even twins who look so much alike, they're actually very different from one another.

THE MOTHER WILL ALWAYS FIND SOMETHING ABOUT THE NOSE

It's a remarkable fact if you look at a family - let's say you visit your cousins or it could be your own family - it's remarkable

how different the children are from each other. It's one of the surprising *nissim*. From the same parents, and yet brothers are so different one from the other. Here you have one brother. He's handsome. He's graceful. He looks like a real Lord Fauntleroy. He's a beautiful boy, but a little bit sleepy, a little bit lazy. Now next to him is his brother; not good looking but a very good boy, full of energy. They look like two families, two different brothers entirely. They don't look alike at all! Maybe you'll find some resemblance in their nose - their mother will always find some resemblance - but otherwise they are entirely different. It's a remarkable fact. And sisters also, sisters are very different one from the other.

Now, some people think maybe it's only their own family where this is a problem. He thinks that one of his brothers is too smart. And his little brother is too dull. One is a *kanoi*, and the other one doesn't care about anything. Maybe in other families it's better. But the truth is that it was this way in the best family as well. The *gemara* (Pesachim 56a) tells us when Yaakov Avinu was on his deathbed and his holy sons were standing around his bed, so he looked up at them, and he was very much worried. They were all different, remarkably different, and that concerned him as he was about to leave this world. After he would pass away, what would hold his children together? They're so different, and he wouldn't be around to hold them in place.

YOUR HUSBAND'S LONG NOSE

And so we see that this peculiar fact, that **אין דעותיהם שוות** and **אין פרצופיהן שוות** is no accident. Hakadosh Baruch Hu intentionally made people different from each other. Nobody in the whole world has the same face. Their voices are not the same. Their thoughts are different, their ideas, their desires. It's a remarkable thing. And so here you have a man married to a woman, a fine woman, but he has a nose a little bit longer than she would like. She doesn't like such a long nose. And he doesn't like this or that. It gnaws at him. They don't like the same foods. And I'm only mentioning some superficial things. There's much more than that, many more differences. I know all about it because my phone is constantly ringing.

Don't ever expect when you get married that your wife will be like you. You will always discover that after all she is a woman and you are a man. **נשים עם בפני עצמם**, women are a different nation,

the *gemara* says (Shabbos 62a). Of course we shouldn't try to emphasize the diversity. Before you get married it's best to look for somebody who eats the same kind of food that you eat, someone who comes from the same background, as much as possible. Of course you should do that; there's no reason to make it more difficult. It's difficult enough as it is. But we have to know beforehand that no matter what, no matter what the *shadchan* tells you, you're going to be surprised to find many more differences than you ever imagined.

And so what we're seeing now is that *no* two people are the same! One brother is different than the next, sisters can't agree on anything, husbands and wives are from different "nations," every neighbor is different than the next - the *Am Yisroel* is a nation of various *shevatim*.

And so we have to wonder, why is that? Wouldn't it be so wonderful, so beautiful, if we all had the same noses. You'd be in love with your husband's nose. And if we all thought alike?! Ahh, it would be a pleasure! *Shalom al Yisroel!*

But no such luck. Nobody is the same. And so we see that there was some reason why Hakadosh Baruch Hu made all of us so different one from another. And we're going to learn now that the answer to this puzzle is actually one of the most vital opportunities for perfection in this world.

IF YOU'RE HERE, THERE'S STILL HOPE

Now to try to answer this puzzle, we'll first study a *possuk* in Koheles (9:4). We read there: **מי אשר יחבר אל כל החיים יש ביטחון** - "If somebody is still connected to the living then there's still hope." Now that seems like such a simple and obvious statement that we're surprised that it's even made - that if you're still breathing, if you're still alive, then there's still hope for you to achieve something in this world.

However, we'll note a superfluous word in the *possuk*. It says, **אל כל החיים** - "He's connected to *all* the living." It could have said you're connected "to the living." Why mention *all* the living? If you're among the living there's still some hope for you, that's all. If the person is already in the cemetery, it's too late. And if he's still with the living, if he's still breathing, he can still accomplish something with his life. Why mention *kol* hachaim, *all* the living?

GET ALONG WITH HIS BLUE HAT

What we're beginning to see now is that all of these differences among ourselves that have been nurtured by Hashem throughout our history - the twelve springs in *Eilim* are only one small example - are there in order to test us. By means of the wide variety of our fellow Jews, we are provided with the great opportunity of getting along with people who are different than we are.

And that's what *Koheles* is telling us - that the one who still wants to retain some *bitachon*, some hope of accomplishing perfection in this world, it's only if he understands that he must be *yechubar el kol hachaim* - attached to *all* the living. Learning how to get along with *all* the different types - the black hats and the blue hats, the long coats and the short coats, the Polish Jews and the Hungarians, the Syrian Jews and the Persians. *El kol hachaim!*

Now of course if he's friendly to you, you'll like him. Or if he wears his *peyos* like you do, or he shakes during davening like you, so you'll like him. Why not? If he's your "type," if he's your *shevet*, it's much easier.

But what will you do with the *Am Yisroel* in its totality - with all of the *frum* Jews who are your brothers? Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects you to have a certain attitude of affection, of love, for the *Am Yisroel* on a whole. It's a *mitzvah min hatorah*. *Veahavta l'reiachah* doesn't mean this man right here who is a good friend of yours, who thinks like you do. *Veahavta* means all of them. And that's *why* we have people in the world. In order to test us whether we'll choose to overcome our natural tendencies to shun those different than ourselves, and instead train our minds to *yechubar el kol hachaim*, to feel connected to everyone.

A LOVE FOR THE SEA

We are always being tested by the differences among people. The fact that some Jews say *bureech* and some say *baruch* or *boruch*, is a test. You know that, don't you? Even the *shevatim* pronounced the words of *lashon kodesh* differently. We see that in the *Tanach* (see *Shoftim* 12:6). And there's no question that they used idioms peculiar to themselves, ate different foods, dressed differently *and thought differently*. And it was the will of Hashem that the differentiation should persist. And it *did* persist! The distinctive physical features and characteristics of each *shevet* became emphasized by the

inbreeding, and to the untrained eye they appeared as different nations.

Like the *gemara* says in *Pesachim* (4a) : **ההוא דהוה קא אזיל ואמר** , a man used to go around and say **אכילי ימא אסיסני ביראתא**, he loved the seashore. He loved the seashore. **בדקו**, they began to investigate. Why are you talking so much about the seashore? And they found out he came from *Zevulun*. **זבולון לחוף ימים ישכון**, *Zevulun* lived near the seashore and they loved it. It's a remarkable thing. Hakadosh Baruch Hu put into *Zevulun* a love for the sea, and therefore they were a seafaring nation. They were sailors with boats and they loved the sea.

SOME KIDS OBEY RULES

Another man used to go around saying **דונו דיני** - "Judge my dispute." That means whenever there was some case between him and a fellow man, he didn't want to arbitrate. He didn't want to make a *pesharah*. "No, let's go to the judge and let's hear what the judge says." Now he said it so many times **דונו דיני, דונו דיני** it was suspicious to people. So **בדקו אחריו**, they searched after his pedigree, and they found that he came from *Dan*. You remember what it says by *Dan*, **דן ידין עמו**. *Dan* was a strict fellow. He followed only the strict line of the law. There are people like that who are very strict with laws. They keep rules. Even little children sometimes are born that way. Some children are like that. They keep rules; it's their nature. Other children, not so much.

Now, all of these character traits were planted in our nation by Hashem - after all, *Dan* didn't follow the strict line of the law because he went to a university of law and read the law journals. It was a trait that Hashem gifted him with. And *Zevulun* wasn't reading Boat Fishing Monthly or whatever magazine it is, and teaching himself to like the sea; no, it was a characteristic that Hashem placed in his heart. And by maintaining its own territory and its own identity, each tribe tended to marry among themselves, and thereby maintain the characteristics that Hashem gifted them with. The character traits were planted by Hashem, and they therefore deserved to be cultivated.

And therefore they remained different. Reuven was very different than Dan and Zevulun. Naftali, Levi, Shimon; they all looked different. They even made sure their *begadim* were different,

and they spoke a different language of *lashon hakodesh*. Their dialect was different. They lived separately, and they had different expressions. Each *shevet* developed different kinds of *melitzos* and language, different *malbushim* and *minhagim*.

DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN BY THE DIFFERENCES

So we see that Hakadosh Baruch Hu put in the *shevatim* different qualities and *the purpose was in order that they should all get together despite their differences*. And when they would come up three times a year to Yerushalayim, it was supposed to be **חברים כל ישראל**, they're all together as one family, despite everything that made them different. They were expected to achieve the perfection of *yechubar el kol hachaim*, despite the difficulties involved.

But it wasn't an easy task. So when a person from *Dan* was passing by and a boy from *Yehudah* saw him, he might have a *yetzer hara* to ridicule and say "Tatty, look at that man. Look at his funny clothing." So the father scolded his son, 'Oh no, don't laugh at him. He's our brother from the holy *shevet* of Dan. Have respect. Every *shevet* is *kadosh*." And when a boy of *shevet Reuven* said, "Look Abba! Isn't that strange how this person from *Efraim* is speaking a queer language - he can't pronounce the words," so the father said, "Shh, we don't talk that way. *Shevet Efraim* is holy. It's a very holy tribe," he said. "They're our people, our brothers." And the *Am Yisroel* learned to overcome the *yetzer hara* of factionism, of *machlokes*, of partisanship. They learned to respect each other's customs and idiosyncrasies and trained themselves to refrain from mocking or ridiculing the language, the clothing and the manners of their brother tribes. They knew that Hashem favored these differences and that they were all "tribes of Hashem" (Tehillim 122:4).

OPPOSITES: ATTRACT!

And so we're expected to learn from that, the lesson of how important it is to be connected to all of the *Klal Yisrael*. Because the many differences are there just for that - to give us the opportunity to train ourselves to respect each other's idiosyncrasies. These have this way of talking and that way of dressing. And even *minhagim*, as mentioned, in *Gallil* they had certain *minhagim*, while in *Yehudah* they did the opposite - other *minhagim*. And the *Am Yisroel* had to get used to respecting the different *minhagim* of their fellow Jews.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to give us the great opportunity of perfection - the perfection of *yechubar el kol hachaim*. Hashem wants us to struggle to be *yechubar* to all those who are living, *el kol hachaim*, to feel an affection for all the different types. We are expected to overcome the tendency to break up into factions *in our minds* - that's a *yetzer hara*, to actually feel that we are different factions. Now that's a very big *nisayon* by the way, to retain the individuality that Hashem wants, and yet to feel attached with an actual affection to every frum Jew - it's a very big test.

BUMS IN THE BAR MAKE PEACE

Now, of course there will always be dissension because each one has his own mind. Each one is working toward a principle - when a principle is involved you can't just yield. You know when bums get together in a bar and they have a dissension, so they could make peace more readily. They could unite with ease because what are they fighting about already? It's nothing after all.

Whereas people who have principles can't unite. That's why you find *Lubawitcher* go their way and the *Satmerer* their way. And the *Lakewooder* and the other *litvisheh yeshivoos* don't go on either of those ways. The *litvisheh* go their own way and the *sefardim* walk a different path. And *chas v'shalom* that they should become united in their principles! *Chas v'shalom!* Because if so, all principles would die out. Each one tries to serve Hashem according to the way he understands best - and each one respects and loves the other one *just because of that*.

YOU BETTER ARGUE!

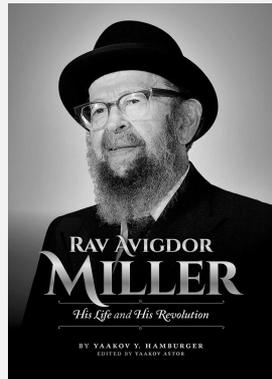
You know when Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai argued, nobody ever said, "Come on boys, let's just settle down and come to an agreement. What's the use of arguing over nothing?" No, it's *not* nothing. It's everything! It's the most important thing to argue about - there is nothing else worth arguing about except how to serve Hashem. And each one sought to serve Hashem in the best way. And Hakadosh Boruch Hu intended that - it was no accident. From the beginning it was all planned - each *shevet*, each *kehillah* with its own ways, because of the great opportunities for perfection it affords us. Because that's what Hakadosh Boruch Hu wants from us, the *shleimus* of learning to get along with those who are different from you.

You know, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, the previous one, *zichrono l'vracha*, to America, it wasn't an accident. Now, we think that he came here in order to bring back people to *yiddishkeit*. And it's true - he was *machzir b'teshuva* a lot of people. But that's not the whole truth.

And when Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought the *Satmerer Rav*, *zichrono l'vracha*, to America, people think it was for the purpose of helping rebuild *chassidus* in Williamsburg. They were the *ud mutzal m'eish*; people who went through concentration camps, dejected people, broken families, ruined men and women. And he encouraged them to marry again and have children, and he almost single-handedly built up a big *kehillah*. So people saw that he was sent by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to be *matzil* a very great *kehillah*. And he did! We can't thank the *Satmerer Rav* enough for what he did for America. But that's not the whole truth.

THE LUBAVITCHERS ARE LITVAKS

We have to realize something that we don't like to realize. There was another great benefit that Hashem wanted by bringing various *kehillos* together. And that's the fact that the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* came to America to help the *Satmerer kehillah*! And the *Satmerer Rav* came to America to help the *Lubavitcher kehillah*! You understand that it's two separate *kehillos*. They can't even talk together - their language is different. It's hard to understand what



A grandson once showed him a picture in the newspaper depicting an apparent conflict between Jewish groups. "It's trick photography," said Rav Miller. "The media loves to drum up conflicts even where none exist. These Jews really love each other and so we love both groups."

"But they seem to be really fighting," his grandson persisted.

"I'll explain," Rav Miller replied. "The army has many divisions: the marines, the navy, the air force, etc. Each one is convinced that they are the best, and naturally they feel animosity toward the other branches. Yet, as far as the rest of the nation is concerned, they are one unified army supporting its country. And that is how everyone must look at them, for that is all that concerns them. Every soldier must know where he belongs and stay there - and so should you."

The grandson asked, "Who should I side with?"

"You just have to know that you are in the army of Hashem," Rav Miller answered. "and continue doing whatever service you are performing, keeping your own position. You don't have to be concerned with the issues of others." (Rav Avigdor Miller - *His Life and His Revolution* p. 292)

the *Satmerer* are saying if you're not accustomed to their language. And they have different *minhagim*. I'm not talking only about Torah *minhagim* - they have different *minhagim* even in eating - how they eat, what they eat. Many things are different about them. These are *litvakers* - the *Lubavitcher chassidim* are mostly *litvakers*. They speak a *litvish* Yiddish, and the *Satmerer* come from Hungary and places like that - it's a different language.

So what did Hakodosh Boruch Hu do? He said, "I can't let them remain that way. To be so separate that they never see each other, and never learn to get along despite their differences, that's a failure. I want them to get a *shleimus*. So I'll bring them to America. I'll bring the Bobover and the Litvakers together, and the Syrians and the Persians too. I'll bring them to one place so that they should continue to stand strong in their principles So that they should see the differences between them, and retain those differences, *and yet at the same time they should get along with each other and love one another*. The *machlokes* is a great benefit for them, a great opportunity for perfection.

RAV MILLER PREDICTS THE FUTURE

Because no matter how important are the principles that they stand for - and they *must* stand their ground - but all of them have the same Hakodosh Boruch Hu and the same Torah. And the end will be that maybe they'll intermarry too. They'll dance together at weddings! It might take some time, a generation or two generations, but the perfection of being loyal to their principles at the same time as feeling a deep affection for one another, will come. At the end you'll see that they'll live together. And each one will gain a perfection that he could never have gotten otherwise.

If you would sit in *Satmar* in Europe all your life and you would stew in your own juice - you'd never have any opposition, you'd never see people with different *minhagim* - so you're not being tested *and you're not being perfected*. It's the opposition that makes you great. When you're sitting in your own *beis medrash* but you come into contact with someone who has a different *Rebbe*, and different ways, that's your opportunity for greatness.

A BENT-DOWN HAT MAKES ME ANGRY!

And sometimes it's not even important things - it's little things that bother you. His *yarmulkeh* is this way and your *yarmulkeh*

is a different way. Maybe your hat is round and his hat is bent over. You don't like that! A bent down hat you can't stand; you're angry at it! And when he sees your round hat, he thinks you look like a *ba'al ga'avah*. "What does he think he is? A *rebbeh*!?" And so there's friction. It's **ואין "כובעיהם" ואין דעותיהם שוות** - their hats are different, their faces are different and their ideals are also different.

And with all that, they overcome those petty things like hats and *yarmulkehs* and coats, and they say "I choose to be *yechubar el kol hachaim*, to all of the various frum Jews, because *it's all just a test*. And I'm going to pass that test and make myself more and more perfect every day."

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Now all this is easier said than done. But once we begin to understand how important this *avodah* is, so we begin to realize that this is one subject on which it pays to concentrate. Because it's easy to say, "Get along with people," but it's not always easy to do. You have to have some motivation and that's an important subject on which we should concentrate for a few minutes.

So the question is how do you start working on that in order to fulfill this *mitzvah* from the Torah? *Veaha'vta* is a *klal gadol betorah*, it's a very great rule of the Torah that you should have a feeling of love, of actual affection, for your fellow Jews. But how do we do it? How can we learn to love our fellow Jews?

FELLOW JEW MEANS OBSERVANT JEW

Notice that I'm not saying your fellow *man*. Forget about fellow *man*. Your fellow *Jew*! Fellow Jew means only your fellow *observant* Jew. The *reshaim* we leave out. *Achicha, reiacha*, means people who are *shomer mitzvos* like you are; the **עבדי אלקי אביך** - all the servants of Hashem, that's the *Am Yisroel*. And I'm stressing that point because that is the answer to our question! I'll explain that.

I mentioned to you before about Yaakov Avinu's worries as he lay on his deathbed. He saw children who were so different from one another, and he was concerned, "How could these children become one big unified nation?" So the sons understood their father's worry and they consoled their father. Now listen to what they said because it's what we have to always be saying if we want to overcome this problem and succeed at *yechubar el kol hachaim*, to be connected with all the living. They told Yaakov Avinu, "There's

nothing to worry about: שמע ישראל, "Listen our father, Yisroel, השם אלקינו, Hashem is our G-d, השם אחד, all of us have one G-d." We might wear different hats and pronounce words differently. And we'll even argue sometimes. But we're all together "one nation under one G-d." He'll keep us together; He's the "glue" that keeps us together. We're all עבדי אלקי אביך - despite our differences, we're all the servants of Hashem together."

And when Yaakov heard that, he said: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. "If, notwithstanding all your differences you'll be together forever, the *Am Echad* dedicated to *Hashem Echad*, that will be a glory for Hashem, and I can go to the Next World in peace."

HASHEM ECHAD IS THE ANSWER

And so we're learning now that the solution to our differences is the overriding knowledge that we're the *Am Echad* serving the *Hashem Echad*. We're all one people and that's something we have to not just say, but to feel. It's very important for us to learn that, to love every part of the *olam shomrei Torah*, the *Am Hashem*, with all of our hearts.

Now don't just say, "I know that; I do that," because you *don't* do it. It takes work; it takes thinking and talking. You have to think about this whenever you see a fellow Jew who is different than you. He dresses different. He talks different. He davens different. You're almost sure he's from a different *shevet*. So you have to begin planting thoughts in your head. Think about the fact that he's a *shomer mitzvos* like you are. He's a brother in arms. We're all fighting together to maintain the *Am Yisroel*. We have a big army against us, enemies all around us. The *frei yidden* are all enemies with us. The irreligious Jews hate us very much. You should know that. גדולה שנאה ששונאים עמי הארץ את התלמידי חכמים יותר ממה ששונאים אומות שונאים את ישראל, "The irreligious people hate the frum Jews more than the gentiles hate the Jews" (Pesachim 49b). It's a fact. We have to fight for our people and be the best of friends among ourselves because we're surrounded by enemies on all sides. בכל דור ודור, עומדים עלינו לכלותנו, everybody wants to overcome us. And therefore when we feel that we're all fighting together for one cause, for *Hashem Echad*, we're all marching together in the same regiment against the same enemies, so it's easier to have a love for your fellow Jew.

BE PROUD OF EACH OTHER!

And so now we have learned the necessity of identifying with the *Am Yisrael* of today. But you have to identify. If you're ashamed of your people - of any of the *frummeh* - then you're not identifying. You have to be proud of all of your people. That's important. And who are your people? All of us, all the good Jews. Not the liberals. They don't belong to us. Not the reformers, no. They're not proud of us, and we're not proud of them. They want to be like gentiles and they're *nichras mei'amav*. They're all cut off *nebach*. Pity on them. It's a tragedy. What can we do? But we don't want to identify with them.

We don't identify with Ben Gurion, and not with Herzl. And not with anybody like them. עושי מעשה עמך means עמך, those who do the deeds of your people. That's what the *Am Yisrael* means. All the "heroes" that were not loyal to the Torah don't exist for us. We limit our love to those *who serve Hashem*, those who love Hashem, because that is the only glue that binds the *Am Yisrael* together despite our differences.

We identify with all observant Jews, whether they're Jews in *Teiman* or in Lakewood or in *Lubavitch* or Bnei Brak or in Boro Park or Baltimore. Wherever they are, we identify with them. Whether they're Sephardi Jews, whether they're Syrian Jews, whether they're Egyptian Jews. All Jews that are loyal to the Torah, that's our people. That's the *Am Echad*, and we have to identify with them. It's important. You can't feel like he's a stranger. A Galicianer can't think, "I'm a stranger to a Hungarian Jew." No, we're not strangers to anybody if they're loyal Jews. It's very important for us to learn that.

DO YOU WEAR A TOP HAT FOR YONTIF?

So now the *Teimanim* come with their robes and their turbans and the Jews come let's say from Canada with black hats. Some would come in with top hats yet. Some still wear top hats on *yontif*, silk hats. A man wearing a top silk hat and another man wearing a turban look at each other with the greatest respect. That's my brother. Another *shevet*, all *shivtei Kah*, holy people.

Ohhh, now we're talking! Because even though we all have our differences and our own lives, there always remains this glue of service of Hashem that binds us together in this kinship of brotherhood. It's much more than a blood line; it's a real bond, a bond of the mind, something that actually ties us together.

We're not merely connected to each other by blood, by DNA. A fellow Jew is a brother who is עמיתך, he's בתורה ובמצוות. Chazal tell us that אחיך במצוות means אחיך, "your brother in mitzvos." It's not merely a brother of the same ancestor; it's a brother of the same mind! With the same ideals and attitudes; he's your "brother in arms." Among ourselves, we have to be the best of friends. Because no matter where you are; you could be Jew in Australia, a *Satmerer* in Williamsburg, or a Jew in Tel-Aviv, we're all in this world for one purpose, to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu. When we feel that we're all fighting together for one cause, to serve Hashem, we're all marching together in the same regiment, so it's much easier to have a love for your fellow men. How much of an affection are you supposed to feel for brothers who are of one mind with you!

MODEH B'MIKTZAS IS STILL SOMETHING

All the *kehillos*, even the Modern Orthodox who are far away from what we consider the great ideals of *avodas Hashem*, are our brothers. Absolutely! If a Jew is a *shomer mitzvos*, he tries to keep the *mitzvos*, then even though he doesn't exactly do everything the way we do it, he's still a brother. If he doesn't do *aveiros*, I don't care what kind of *yarmulkeh* he wears. If he wears a knitted *yarmulkeh* or if he wears something else, he's still my brother. Even a small little *yarmulkeh*, so he's "a *modeh b'miktzas*," but he's still one of ours. A person who keeps *taharas hamishpacha*, he eats kosher, he sends his children to *yeshiva* and not public school, he's a *shomer Shabbos*, he has *mezuzos* on his doors - so a person like that is our brother, and don't make any mistake about it. And you love him like any other Jew.

Now, don't misquote me; I'm not saying that the modern orthodox man has to be your brother in the sense that you'll move into the same house as him. It doesn't mean that you should associate with him if you don't have to. That's something else altogether. If your brother has the flu, you don't want to be too close to him because it's contagious. But you still love him, no less. Over here, in this place, we say that we want to associate only with the best ones *because we want to be the best*.

But when you see another frum Jew on the street, any frum Jew, he's *your brother* in the most literal sense of the word. And you have a *mitzvah* of ואהבת לרעך כמוך - you have a *mitzvah* to love him. That's how to think about your fellow Jew. And even though he

follows a different rebbe, or a different set of political objectives, nevertheless, don't lose sight of the fact that fundamentally he belongs to your people and that therefore you're obligated, to think well of him, to recognize him as your brother, and to love him.

TRY TO SEE FROM HIS VIEWPOINT

That's what it means לעולם תהא דעתו של אדם מעורבת עם הבריות - A person's mind always should be united - *mi'ureves* means joined - with the minds of other people (Kesubos 17a). Now this I mentioned here more than once that it doesn't mean you have to yield when somebody is doing something wrong; it doesn't mean you should stand down when someone is doing sins. But when you happen to like one thing and somebody else is enthusiastic about something else, and you have no interest in that thing, don't belittle it. Try to agree with people. Always try to see things from the other man's side.

Your mind is different - and Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to keep your mind. And his mind is different - and Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants him to keep his mind. But Hashem brought you together now just for the purpose of benefiting the both of you. That's the *shleimus* of both of you.

So if you walk in the streets and you see Jewish boys with yarmulkes and black hats coming out of the *yeshivas* or buses carrying children to *yeshivos*, so your heart should overflow with happiness. You're looking at your people! Or you see a group of *frum* girls dressed *b'tznius* coming out of the Bais Yaakov schools, walking with decency, and wearing long skirts. It's a pleasure to see!

Your heart is full of happiness to see the *Am Hashem*. You walk through blocks and blocks and see fathers with children going to the *beis hakeneses* and you love to see it. Your heart swells with pride and happiness. You love your people. Hashem wants that. Some people are so happy when they see Jews. They just weep with joy when they see the Jewish people. My people, *ami*.

THAT BOY WAS RUNNING TOWARDS HASHEM

I'll tell you a little story. There was a boy in Chicago. A true story - I won't say his name but today he's an important personality. He lived in a gentile neighborhood. He was a young boy and his heart yearned for his people so one day he got up, took a long walk to the east side of Chicago, to the Jewish neighborhood. And as he

saw a Jewish child walking in the street, he burst into tears. This boy burst into tears. He was so emotionally happy. 'Ahh! My people.' He felt connected to his people. A boy like that is headed towards not just people. He's headed towards Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

That's why it does you very good to walk through Boro Park. Big *mezuzos* one after the other. Blocks and blocks of Jewish houses. And you're thinking as you walk, "I'm walking among my people. בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת. It's my people and I love them. I don't care what hat he wears or what group he belongs to, it's all my people!"

You can't even imagine what an opportunity you're missing by not making use of this feeling of *achvah*, of brotherly camaraderie, that is available to you all the time. The next time you walk into *shul* and you see the *Am Yisroel* gathering to *daven* to Hashem, you should put your mind to work: "This is my nation! My brothers! And we all share the common purpose of serving Hashem." And when you're shopping in the kosher supermarket and it's crowded, and the lines are long - those are precious moments! You're looking down the aisles and all you can see are your "brothers and sisters". Women, men, children, all buying kosher food. That's a nation dedicated with a singular heart to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין לֵהֶם אֱלֹהִים אֶחָד - "The whole *Am Yisroel* has but one heart devoted to their Father in Heaven" (Sukkah 45b). It's not just poetry; that's actually the greatness of the *Am Yisroel* that binds us as brothers.

THIS IS A CAREER

Now this is not a small thing that you heard tonight. It's a career. You have to be serious of course. You have to not only hear it, hearing is very important, you have to try to practice it. Now even though you do it a little bit, it's a tremendous achievement. If you'll think once a week about it, once a week, for two minutes on the subject of achieving a certain respect and love for kol hachaim, for all of your fellow Jews, then you know that you came to this world for a purpose!

Now, all this might seem little queer for those who don't know their purpose in the world. So when you go outside later and they'll ask you, "What did Rabbi Miller speak about tonight?" So you'll say, "He told us to love our fellow Jew." They'll laugh at you: "What's the *chiddush*? Who doesn't know that?!" But the truth is *who does it?* Who thinks about it? If he loves, he loves; if not, what could

he do already? He's *patur*, he thinks. But no, we're learning tonight that you have to work on loving the *Am Yisroel*, with an intense love. And you'll do it by first of all recognizing that we're an *Am Echad*.

You have a big career ahead of you because when it says **וואהבת לרעך כמוך**, it doesn't mean that you should tolerate him, or even that you should get along with him. It means that you should generate a *ahavah*, a love, a real love, for your fellow Jew. You have to understand how far away we really are from even beginning such an *avodah*. Of course, we're willing to say that we agree with the idea. Maybe someday we'll even come around to it. But we won't. You won't come around to it unless you start doing something about it. And when a person begins to understand that, and feel a little bit of love for all of his fellow *ovdei Hashem*, then he has achieved the perfection that Hashem expected from him since that day many years ago when He prepared twelve separate springs in *Eilim* for the *Am Yisroel*. It's the perfection of choosing for yourself the good from all the *shevatim*, as well as the perfection of feeling a love, a real affection, for all those different than you. And those two methods of *shleimus*, are the main purpose of why Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought you into this world of the twelve different *shevatim*.

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תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביד ויגדד זקניד ויאמרו לך"



Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Tz"l

Q:

Should a person ever give in to his desires?

A:

Absolutely! Absolutely you should give in to your desires. You have a desire to eat, give in. When you feel hungry, when you feel a desire to eat, that's a message *min hashamayim*, and it's a *mitzvah* to eat. It's time to go to sleep? Give in to that desire. Don't hang around and talk. Give in to your desire and go to sleep early; certainly. Go to the bathroom. Don't hold yourself in! It's very unhealthy, and it causes constipation. Give in to your desire and go to the bathroom; certainly. All of the good desires that Hashem made, give in to them.

But let's say your desire is only to waste time, then don't give in to that desire. Why give in to desires that lead you nowhere? A desire to eat *nosherei*? For what purpose?! Develop a desire to learn. What a pleasure it is! A person can develop a *cheshek* to learn, and he loves learning; he desires learning. Get a desire to learn, a desire to look in a *sefer*. There's so much happiness in that desire. You have to acquire the hobby of learning. I use the word hobby – *chas v'shalom*, it's not a hobby, *L'havdil!* It's a desire that you should develop. Get into the *cheshek* of learning, of always looking into *seforim*. That's a desire to give in to. And it's a tremendous achievement.

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