

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Reflections on Ahavas Israel

We are in the month of Cheshvan, after the plethora of holy days in Tishrei. We have no Yom Tov now until Pesach.

In Kislev, we will have Chanukah and in Adar, we will have Purim.

On Yom Kippur we clopped our hearts for the collective sins of every Jewish person. The pronoun used was "we". Together, we stood before Hashem, no matter if we were in an Orthodox, a Conservative, a Reconstructionist or a Reform service. It almost seems that we have as many different factions as we have individual Jews. Or perhaps, more realistically, that we have as many different factions as we have synagogues.

What unifies us? The only thing that has absolutely unified us in this world has been anti-Semitism. It made no difference to Hitler what kind of a Jew he exterminated. All that mattered to him was that a Jew was killed

Does it take this type of adversity for us to realize that, no matter what our differences, we have more in common with each other than with any other nation or people? Perhaps this thought is upsetting to some. I know many Jews who would not like to be included in a group that has ideas that they don't accept or follow.

If we accept our unity in terms of anti-semitism, if we would all be ready to give up our lives to die for the sake of being a Jew, then does it not make sense to strive to find some common ground by which we can live together when there is no immediate threat, live together as a nation of Jews, of diversity, of 12 tribes and individual missions?

Again, I ask, what unifies us?

Or, perhaps I might ask, Who unifies us? Are we a nation because Hashem declared that we are one nation?

Every Jewish person reading this - please realize that there is a Creator of the World to whom we are connected. Whether or not we comprehend this connection or nurture this connection, is already something else. The reality that I care to impress upon the reader is that there is a Creator Who runs the world, and Who loves every Jew. When we look at each other, we remember this - Hashem loves that Jew! It brings us to a place from which we can respect another, even if we do not agree with the other. If we see another doing something that is in violation of Hashem's will, we have the opportunity to practice patience, just as Hashem waits patiently for us to repent for what we do wrong. In so doing, we emulate Hashem's middah of patience, which means that we truly are shining His light in the darkness.

In the morning, when we wake up, please let your first burst of energy be Modeh Ani Lifanecha Melech Chai Vikayom - Thank you to Hashem for returning my soul to me. Offer a prayer to Hashem, let Him know that you know that He is running things. We all have our adult responsibilities to attend to, but when we say tehillim before making our efforts, we spread a message of faith to our children and friends that is most valuable.

If every Jewish person comes to connect in this way to knowing that there is a Creator, a Creator who is running things, Who loves us, Who wants to give good to us, then we will have congealed ourselves in a most basic and Jewish way as one nation, no matter what else each Jew does or does not do.

What unifies us is our recognition that there is a Creator Who desires to give us good. Let us recognize this reality. Building attachment to this truth, regardless of ritual practice, is the fundamental thread of unity.

Why is this on my mind? Why am I writing this?

The Jews have many enemies in the world right now. Historically, suffering that has been brought upon us has been for the purpose of bringing us to cry out to Hashem, to ask Him for help - Father Father!

When we call out, He swoops us up in His arms and saves us. But if we don't know we have a Father, and we don't cry out to Him, how can He swoop us up in his arms and save us when we need it? Instead, the suffering comes upon us. More and more suffering, until we cry out to Him, because we have no where else to turn.

I like short cuts. If we can see that there is more suffering for Jews in the world, why not take the message and understand NOW what to do? Why wait until more severe tests are sent, causing everyone to scream Father Father! If we see that there is a Giant with a huge stick threatening us, do we have to wait for the stick to strike us before we cry out Father Father? Are our differences, our disputes and our individuality blinding us?

Calling every Jew! Time to "get on the Ark!" Please wake up with the realization that the Creator restored your soul and is running things. Then, offer a prayer, begin speaking to Him. Let that be the unifying thread.