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FOR THE LOVE OF JEWS

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1. Many noble qualities have contributed to the historical cohesion and survival of the world Jewish community, despite its dispersion in exile over the face of the earth. Among these qualities, such as common religion, customs, traditions, ethnic similarity, language, home life, and so on, one stands out for its beauty, steadfastness and its depth - AHAVAT YISROEL, the love of one Jew for another. It is a bond, an affection, a love that transcends differences in color, language, social standing, local customs and even opinions. It ~~is~~ serves as the mortar for the world Jewish community, that ~~undefinable something~~ which always makes one Jew feel a sense of kinship with any other, which makes brothers of two ~~men~~ though one be fair and the other dark-skinned, though one speak only Arabic and the other only English, though one wear a hat and the other a turban and the third nothing at all.
2. This Love of Israel is one of those enduring qualities of our people's existence which our Rabbis found in their symbolic interpretation of that profound and sacred song we read this morning, the SHIR HA'SHIRIM. Our Sages noticed that Solomon, in this holy and charming song, makes frequent reference to that fruit known as a nut. EL GINAS EGOZ YARADTI, I went down to the nut-garden, says the lover in this religious poem. Why, they wondered, only this kind of garden and this kind of fruit. Since the entire poem is a symbolic dialogue between G-d and Israel, is there not something deeply significant in these words and in this metaphor? Yes, our Rabbis answered, there is a reason for this particular poetic image, for it is the symbol of Israel. Other fruits are soft skinned, while the nut is a hard-shelled fruit. But other fruits, if placed in a basket, are such that if you remove one of them, the others are unaffected and unshaken. But take this hard-shelled nut, which seems so pugnacious and individualistic, and place them in a basket, and try to remove one of them - and the entire batch of them will rattle. You cannot remove one of these without the others being aware of it. Despite the seeming outer toughness and hardness, there is a community of feeling. That, our Rabbis said, is true of Israel. Each Jew, in his own way, may seem hard and hard-boiled, hard-shelled and tough and perhaps at times insensitive. But just touch his brother, just harm one Jew, and all the others will feel it - for the hardness is only an outer shell, and inside, deep in the soul, every Jew identifies himself with every other Jew. EL GINAS EGOZ YARADTI, the Lord went down to the nut-garden, to his people Israel, and, noticing this quality, He delighted in His people. There is nothing that makes G-d love Israel as Israel's love of Israel.
3. What this indicates, in the larger sense, is an idea which has come under attack in America of recent years. It indicates that AHAVAT YISRAEL is a consequence of one great fact - and that is, the ONENESS OF ISRAEL. Despite all the diversity in biological features, in psychological mannerisms and political opinions, there is a oneness about Israel that binds every one Jew to every other Jew. It is this unity of Israel that makes all Jews feel pain when one is hurt, and all Jews happy when one is fortunate. The attack against this idea of oneness of Israel is one that is leveled by the American Council for Judaism and their cohorts - including Dorothy Thompson and the whole list of anti-semitic Arab propagandists - when their annual diatribe-sessions, called "conventions", are held. All that binds one Jew to another is a bare and minimal set of abstract religious ideals, which are fairly innocuous and can be subscribed to by any person of any faith. But there are, according to them, many kinds of Jews - American, Polish, Israeli - and they have no relationship with each other. In other words, they deny the Oneness of Israel. And what is the result? A natural one: they retain no AHAVAT YISROEL, no Love for Israel. They subscribe to the Arab view on Palestine. They join native anti-semites in charges of "double allegiance" against the majority of American Jews. One depends on the other. You cannot

separate ACHDUS YISRAEL from AHAVAS YISRAEL, the Oneness of Israel from the Love for Israel. They go hand in hand, and deny one and you must deny the other.

No wonder our Rabbis recorded in the Midrash that beautiful reference to the Tefillin that G-d wears. They said that just as in our Tefillin there is a parchment on which is written SHMA...HA'SHEM ECHAD....so does G-d, so to speak, put on Tefillin, and in them it is written: SHMA HA'SHEM YISROEL AMCHA YISROEL ECHAD...One People, indivisible despite all diversities.

Hassidim tell of Reb Yechezkelle Kuzmierz who was the guest of the world renowned Pshis'cher Rebbe. As they were strolling one day, in silence, Reb Yechezkelle took his snuff-box ("Tabak-Pushke") and handed it to the Pshis'cher, who took some snuff and asked his friend, in astonishment, "How did you know that just then I happened to want some tobacco?" To which Reb Yechezkelle answered, "Well, how does the hand know that the nose wants some snuff and thus reach for the box and lift it to the nose? Obviously, because both are part of the same body. Where there is true love and devotion, there two people are like one body, and one automatically feels the other's needs and wants and moods and feelings."

That is the relationship that we call Love of Israel, the Love of Jews - it comes from the deeper fact of the Oneness of Israel. Ahavas Yisrael and Achdus Yisrael.

4. Having established the fact that Ahavas Yisrael derives from Achdus Yisrael, we come to an even more revealing fact. We know that the Love of Israel which all Jews should feel is not a jingoistic, nationalist, exclusivist idea which means that we must dislike non-Jews. Quite the contrary, it is a step in the direction of love of all people. Ahavas Yisrael is the prerequisite for Ahavas Ha'brios, for love of all men. But if it is not a narrow, clannish type of love, what then is it?

And the answer is that Ahavas Yisrael is based squarely on another kind of love: Ahavas Ha'shem, the Love of G-d. For Israel's Oneness exists only because G-d chose this people to give the Torah to, to reveal this noblest of all ways of life, to teach the world to serve G-d faithfully, ethically and morally. So that if the Love of Israel is based on the Oneness of Israel, and of the Oneness of Israel is the choice of G-d Almighty, then the logical conclusion is that Love of Israel is a part of Love of G-d. I love Jews because I love the Creator of all men who chose this people as His people. When this Love of Jews is based on secular ideas, it becomes mere nationalism. If it is based on the Torah, on religious principles, it becomes a sacred idea and lofty feeling which is graced with the charm of true religious beauty.

When the writer of the Hagaddah wants to castigate the RASHA, the evil son who is cynical and who pokes fun at Jewish ritual, he stresses that the RASHA excludes himself from the people of Israel: MAH HA'AVODAH HA'ZOS LACHEM, what does all this mean to YOU - I am too proud to do such things, I have no part of this Jewish "business". And what is the judgement of the Hagaddist on the RASHA? - LEFI SHE'HOTZI ES ATZMO MIN HA'KLAL KAFAR BE'IKAR, because he excluded himself from the community, he is a heretic who denies the fundamentals of Torah. There it is - a logical consequence. Deny the Oneness of Israel, the Love for Israel, and you have denied the entire Torah. Reject KEDUSHAS YISRAEL and you have rejected KEDUSHAS HA'SHEM.

5. But one more fact should be mentioned about the practical application of Ahavas Yisrael if it is indeed to be an exercise in Ahavas Ha'shem and a reaffirmation of Achdus Yisrael. And that is, that AHAVAS YISRAEL must apply to all Jews. If I love only upper middle class semi-observant white American Jews whose parents came from Pinsk, that is provincial clannishness, not Ahavas Yisrael, not the kind of love that is based on the unity of the world Jewish community and the kind that is really a part of Love of G-d. I must love all Jews, because all together are one, and because it was G-d who chose that one people

6. Some of the recent acrimonious battling in Jerusalem between the leftist socialist Jews of Mapai and Mapam, and the ultra-rightist Jews of the Neturei Karta, that extremist group of religious Jews in Meah Shearim, has left us in doubt as to whether any of them are possessed of true Ahavas Yisrael. The Neturei Karta group, entrenched in a certain section of the Holy City, wants to live its own kind of life without interference, a request which is understandable and legitimate. The leftists do not want to be disturbed in their ways. Also understandable. But when the leftist group makes purposeful forays into the Holy City in open defiance of the Sabbath, and desecrated all that is holy to the inhabitants of these sections in front of their very eyes without any regard as to their religious feelings, there is something lacking in their Ahavas Yisrael. American Jewish housewives and homeowners are extremely careful not to offend the religious sensitivities of their Christian neighbors on Sunday mornings, but socialist Jews in Israel must go out of their way to incense their fellow-Jews in their own country. When, on the one hand, the Neturei Karta and their sympathizers in N.Y. display placards in public to the effect that Israeli Jews are executing programs on religious Jews in Israel; or, on the other hand, Mapam hooligans do act like program inciters, as one boastfully wrote in an Israeli periodical that he cut the "peyos" off a number of pious young Neturei Karta members; that kind of activity and publicity smacks of hatred and un-Jewishness in the extreme. It is outright CHILUL HA'SHEM.
7. Judaism recognizes that some people are better than others, that some Jews become good Jews and others bad Jews. At times it is necessary to engage in controversy and attempt to influence or even vanquish the other side in debate. But hatred - that never. True Torah-living requires us to love every kind of Jew, even the poorest kind.
8. Rabbi Y.L.Maimon (in a recent issue of Panim El Panim) writes of a letter that was to the famous Rabbi Israel Salanter by his teacher, in which he discusses the entire topic of Ahavas Yisrael. And in it, the teacher writes that Ahavas Yisrael, the Love of Israel, must be like Ahavas Eretz Yisrael, the Love for the Land of Israel. Just as one who is devoted to the Land and loves it with all his might and all his heart does not discriminate between the Galilee or the Negev, between hilly sections and plain areas, between fertile and barren ground, between desert and garden, between valley and hillmountain, but loves all the Land, every bit of it no matter how dry and arid, so must one love Israel: every Jew, no matter how plain, how poor, how insensitive, how unintelligent, how undevoted to Torah, how different from himself. Ahavas Yisrael is not discriminatory. All Jews are children of G-d, and all are to be loved as such.
9. This, then, is the enduring quality which our Rabbis found buried in the Garden of Nuts. The Love of Jews is based on the Love of G-d, presumes the Oneness of Israel, and encompasses all Jewry, all Israel, all parts of the one body.
10. EL GINAS EGOZ YARADTI, LIROS BE'IBEI HA'NACHAL, "I went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower. Before I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my princely people". With the blossoming of Ahavas Yisrael, with this ever youthful love and eternal bond of affection between all members of the body of Israel, the chariots of our princely people* will carry aloft the souls of all Israel to meet the ^{true} beloved of our people, the L—d G-d of Israel.