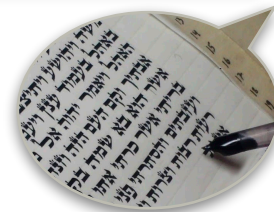




# The Collective Conversation

*Weekly Torah Essays from the  
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community*



**Sefer Bereshit**

**Parshat Bereshit**

**Tishrei 5784 / October 2023**

*Yeshivat HaKotel hosted a worldwide Achdus Learning Experience days before Shevuot in May of 2020, a date that seems like a lifetime ago.*

*We begin this Torah cycle with a summary of a talk delivered at that meeting. Choosing to discuss achdus was prescient when the talk was given, and it is as relevant now as it was then.*

*Rav Perez is the Chief Executive of the Mizrahi World Movement.*

## **Rav Kook's Magic Formula for Jewish Unity**

*By Rav Doron Perez (Summarized by Saul Bishop, Hakotel 5780)*

Rabbi Neriah, founder of Bnei Akiva high schools delivered a powerful shiur to teachers across Israel on the 5th day of the Six Day War. He asked, why did the Kotel come under our control in such a short time? The IDF even pleaded with the Jordanians not to enter the war. As King of Jordan shelled Jerusalem, they begged him to stop, promising they wouldn't retaliate. Yet it wasn't to be, as we gained control of Jerusalem in a heartfelt return. In what zechut did we merit it? Just 19 years earlier in 1948, we lost Jerusalem so quickly - just 2 weeks after declaring independence. Every shul was destroyed as thousands of residents were driven out of the old city. The difference between losing it and gaining it again was the power of unity. We were so divided in 1948, yet united in 1967.

In 1948, the Haganah and Palmach, the Irgun and Lechi were completely divided. These divisions were clear in the battle for Jerusalem, where the Palmach and Haganah tried to enter through Zion Gate as the Irgun entered through Damascus Gate, each one vying for supremacy. Rav Neriah explained you can't bring Jerusalem, the essence of Jewish unity, into our control if you're not united. These divisions were expressed in the fatal altalena affair, where a civil war would have broken out if not for Begin's deep desire for unity. The battle for Jerusalem could never be taken in this context.

By way of contrast in 1967, Jews were united for the first time, forming a national unity government. Despite the exceptional enmity of the members as expressed by Ben Gurion who never even referred to Begin by name, they stood together as one. They came to liberate Jerusalem "keish echad beleiv echad". We merited Jerusalem as we came into Jerusalem as one. One politically, one militarily and one as Jews around the world praying for our soldiers. That is what Jerusalem and Matan Torah is all about.

There is a very cryptic verse in Psalms 122 "Yerushalayim Ke'ir Chechubrah Yachdav", "Jerusalem is like a city joined together". The Yerushalmi in Chagigah explains what it means that Jerusalem is "like" a city, as Jerusalem has the power and potential to bring Jewish people together. Only in that way can Jerusalem be united.

Exactly one week before Shavuot, on Rosh Chodesh Sivan the Six Day War ended as 200,000 people from all walks of life came as one, to celebrate the recapture of Jerusalem. Just as they had gathered at the foot of Har Sinai, this was the most appropriate time for war to end, as this is precisely what Shavuot is all about. To be zocher to fulfill the Torah on the other mountain, as the Jews embarked on the journey of

Jewish history from Sinai, to Moriah. The journey has to begin and end with unity. How do we achieve this unity?

David Hamelech was born and died on Shavuot. The Yerushalmi says the reason we read Sefer Rut on Shavuot is to reflect on David Hamelech and his legacy as he was born and died on Shavuot.

What did David Hamelech manage to do that no one else has ever managed to achieve? There is a Machloket as to the nature of how Moshiach is going to arrive. Whether through transcending the forces of nature, or through a more natural slow process, everyone agrees that he must achieve a unity based on desire. Whilst throughout history we have achieved a unity based on threats from outside pressures, this unique unity can only be brought by the redemption. By Har Sinai, unity was suspended in time, which didn't last long, as seen through the trials and tribulations which followed as expressed through Korach. However, David managed to unify the Jewish people over time, which enabled him to build the Beis Hamikdash. This is what we're trying to achieve, to relive the matan Torah experience achieved then. That is David's legacy- to bring this unity.

To understand Rav Kook's profound idea on unity we'll begin with a fundamental question, who was Avraham Avinu? A person of unparalleled Emunah? A person of national tendencies and fervor for his people? A person who deeply valued universalism? He embodies the person of emunah as he went with passion and fervor to offer his only son on Mount Moriah. The passion and the fervor show how he's single minded. How could he go and commit 'murder' in the name of Hashem? Whilst Hashem would never have allowed him to actually go ahead with the act, Hashem nevertheless wanted an Ish emunah as the founder of our religion. Yet, he was also nationalistic, when Lot, who separated with him to live amongst the vulgar immoral Sodmites, gets taken, Avraham out of impulse takes all of his 318 men and goes to rescue Lot. Hashem didn't command him, yet of his own accord he went ahead to risk his life, which as an offshoot was risking the whole future of the Jewish people just to rescue his wayward nephew? Yes, this characteristic is embedded in our nature as we see from the price we paid to rescue Gilad Shalit, we will do anything and everything to save a Jew. Yet Avraham was also equally humanistic, expressing an unbelievable sensitivity to all human beings, as in the pain of the 3rd day of the Brit, he invited guests in, despite the fact that they were idol worshippers, as he treated them like kings and queens. Likewise, when Hashem is about to destroy Sodom, Avraham pleads with Hashem due to his love of every human being, due to the fact they were created in the image of Hashem. Avraham, the founder of Jewish unity embodies these three attributes.

This is the essence of Jewish unity, to bring "hakodesh haumah vhaadam" together. Torah is these three components, unbending belief in Hashem to do anything in any situation. This same Torah incorporates "areivim ze lazeh" that we'll do anything for our fellow Jew. This same nationalistic fervor doesn't end there, as we should have a love of everything that's "Tzelem Elokim" that everything was created in the image of G-d to bring all of humanity together under kanfei hashechinah.

May these values continue to bring Jews together - these same values that we received at Har Sinai broad enough to bring all Jews together, a sense of faith and destiny, to bring the holy, the nationalistic and the universal as one. That is the recipe of Jewish unity. May the Torah be the spirit to bring all Jews together.



**The Collective Conversation** is a project of the  
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