

Invitation to **UNITE**

*Uniting as
One*

The Connection between Us Keeps Us Safe

Oh People of Israel

These days are trying days for Israel - as a nation and as people. And trying days are an opportunity for reflection on the essence of our nation.

The survival of the people of Israel has always been dependent upon its unity. Therefore, now, more than ever, we must unite. If we rekindle the love among us, we will protect ourselves better than any “Iron Dome” will ever do. Moreover, unity will continue to protect us even when the storm subsides, endowing us with peace within, and the favor of the nations.

The Least of All the Nations

We are a small people, and like it or not, what happens to our fellow Hebrews affects all of us. This is what compels us to watch the news so often, or keep checking out the news bulletins, especially concerning Israel.

At such a trying time we should embrace and support each other, and keep up hope. But beyond the military campaign that seems to split our nation and tear it from within, another, graver struggle is underway - the struggle for our unity. This, and none other, will determine the fate of the campaign that has been raging not only in Gaza, but indeed the world over.

The Connection between Us Keeps Us Safe

Shortly before the IDF began its ground campaign in Gaza, Hamas published a song intended to undermine the Israeli people's morale. A certain line in that song merits special notice: "The hearts of the Zionists each turn a different way, no two are the same."

There is good reason why Hamas praises the separation in our midst. When we are disunited, we are weak. But when we are united, a protective cover spreads over us.

Therefore, the responsibility lies with us. An ounce of separation among us adds tons of hatred toward us, whereas an inch of marching toward each other brings all nations miles closer to us, and to each other.

About two centuries ago, Rabbi Kalman HaLevi wrote in his book, *Maor VaShemesh (Light and Sun)*: "Our prime defense against calamity is love and unity." Put differently, mutual guarantee is the secret to our power. The connection between us keeps all of us safe.

Why Unity?

The story of the recent war in Gaza, and in fact of all our wars, is the story of our identity and of the force that has sustained us - the people of Israel - for millennia. If we want to stop the bloodshed once and for all, we need to pause and reflect on this story.

The Power of the Nation of Israel

The people of Israel originated in ancient Babylon. It was fashioned out of Babylonian tribes that lived in Mesopotamia over 4,000 years ago. Abraham (the patriarch) gathered around him people from among the residents of Babylon and told them what was on his mind. At the time, Babylon was torn and its residents were in constant conflicts with one another. The Biblical story speaks of people becoming alienated from each other for lack of mutual understanding.

Abraham told them about the unity of Nature we all live in, and about a sense of endless love that fills all who perceive it. “Thousands and myriads gathered unto him, and he implanted that great tenet in their hearts,” writes Maimonides about Abraham in *Mishneh Torah*.

Thus, the people of *Ysrael* (Israel) was born, a nation that aims *Yashar El* (straight to the Creator). We therefore see that the origin of the Israeli nation is not biological or geographical, as is the case with other nations. Rather, it is an idea. At the heart of our people there is love that has been the adhesive that has kept us together all those centuries.

The People of Israel Choose Life

At the time of Moses, we were already a people - the people of Israel. Moses embodies the stage at which we were given a mission. Although that term is something we would readily relinquish - together with the mission itself - reality proves its inevitability. At the foot of Mount Sinai we were required to make a choice that has accompanied us ever since: Unite, as one man with one heart, or here will be our burial place.

So the people of Israel chose life - they chose unity. “And Israel encamped there, before the mount” (Ex, 19:2), and RASHI interprets, “As one man with one heart.”



The Mission - Spread Unity and Love throughout the World

We, Jews, are the descendants of Abraham's group, which became a nation under Moses' guidance at the foot of Mount Sinai. We had succeeded in implementing the method of connection on ourselves, overcoming every trial and tribulation on the way. For this very reason, we must now be the ones who implement it on ourselves again, and subsequently teach the rest of humankind how to build such a society.

Yet, we constantly avoid it. We speak of unity, but fail to carry out our duty. But we must still unite, and eventually achieve Rabbi Akiva's ultimate expression of unity: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Indeed, we are nowhere near where we should be - living up to the titles of "virtuous people" or "a light for the nations." But we cannot avoid our destiny; it is our duty. We must unite, and display an example of unity to the world.

Unity - Our “Iron Dome”

The people of Israel has known times of unity and success, and times of dispute and bitter failures. And the last (and longest) exile has been, and still is, an exile from our brotherly love. Indeed, it is written in all our ancient writings that the Temple was ruined because of unfounded hatred. And regardless of our dwelling places, as long as we remain in hatred, we are forever expats.

As long as we are hateful of each other, we remain the opposite example from the one we should. Instead of being a role model of unity, we keep falling into the pit of strife. We unite only at a time of trouble, like nuts tied inside a bag. But when the threat is gone, we soon resume our former disenchantment with each other. Until the next blow hits.



Our Fate Still Waits

The inexplicable, irrational hatred so many non-Jews feel at the sound of the words “Jew” or “Israel” is a reminder of our inescapable mission. While they are unaware of it, anti-Semites are actually demanding that we carry out our role. Deep down, they feel we hold the key to their good future, so it makes perfect sense for them to blame us for all of their afflictions.

The World Is Against Us, or Is It?

These days, when so many countries stand firmly behind Hamas, it seems as though the whole world is against us. But instead of wondering why they hate us, we should pay close attention to what they are saying.

Many non-Jews feel that their fate is tied to ours. They swear that we are the cause of every plight and misfortune in the world. They believe that if only we would change our ways for the better (reestablished our unity), everything would be OK. Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, and one of the most famous anti-Semites of all time, wrote in his book, *The International Jew - the World's Foremost Problem*: "Society has a large claim against him [the international Jew] ... that he cease exploiting the world ... and that he begin to fulfill ... the ancient prophecy that through him all the nations of the earth should be blessed."

The Center of the World

By uniting, we make the world unite. And thus, the power and abundance we enjoy when we are united begins to flow to them, as well. At the same time, separation among us separates them, too, stops the flow of abundance and power, and leads the world to war and hatred. This is what makes our unity so vital to the world.

A Light for the Nations

You cannot overestimate the historic responsibility we bear. We are responsible for our unity as a nation. We must open our hearts to one another, as this is the only way we can keep each other, our nation, and the whole world safe.

We have been given a chance to unite “as one man with one heart,” to live in peace among us and with the world, and to win the world’s favor. We cannot pass up this window of opportunity. If we can unite and assume the task to love our neighbors as ourselves, or even if we just aim for it, we will be unassailable.

Carrying Out Unity

Our lives consist of circles - family, friends, coworkers, etc. Just make a list of people, and invite them over for a friendly get-together. Sit together in a circle and start talking about connections, your connections.

You can talk about how to keep unity in the people all the time, instead of only when hardships come about, or about how you can be more openhearted and truly caring for each other. In fact, you can talk about anything you want, as long as you keep certain rules.

Wisdom of the Circle

During the discussion try to follow three rules:

Everyone is equal:

no one's view is more important than another's.

No interjections:

only one person speaks at a time, and that person is heard out (within a reasonable timeframe, such as a minute).

No arguments:

we do not contradict each other's words, only add to what others have said.

The discussion should calmly flow from one speaker to the next. After a very short while you will begin to feel the warmth spreading among you, connecting you. With it, you will discover the wisdom of connection - the same wisdom under which we were born as a nation.

If we build these "circular" connections among us we will win Nature's favor, and we will be granted safekeeping and success.

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