

Parshat Kedoshim

"Unity of the Many Lights" - Unity and Different Opinions

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The Torah commands us: "Love your neighbor as yourself"¹.

It is not hard for one to love his friend and fellow who shares the same opinions and deeds. But how does one learn to love his opponents who constantly disagree with his belief and ideology?

Let us explain this issue in an allegoric way.

The Metaphor of the Mosaic

A mosaic is made from many different stones, which differ from each other, not only in their color but in their shape as well. If the mosaic would be identical, the whole mosaic would not be of any interest at all. Therefore, every stone completes the other, and together they form a masterpiece.

If one stone would be missing, the whole structure of the mosaic would fall apart, and the entire mosaic would lose its splendor. Therefore, every piece has its significance when it is in its place.

If one views the mosaic from a near angle and narrow perspective, he is dazzled by the swirl of colors and shapes spinning to and fro in a pandemonium. If he takes a few steps back and broadens his perspective, he sees all the small, seemingly trivial, details form together to a unique and splendid work of art.

Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935), the first Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, sees this metaphor as the true example to the complex structure of the society of the nation of Israel. The structure of "the mosaic of the nation" is formed from many different parties and ideological streams, which differ from each other in their character traits and perspectives. If the life of the nation would be equivalent, the improvement and construction of the nation would be inactive, and the nation would not advance forward. Therefore, "when life blossoms, when there is worthy revelation of formations, the points of view can not be fixed only according to one form of style"². On the contrary, each and every one of the people of Israel has living inside of him a spark of holy light from the heritage of our forefathers, the holiness of the Torah, and the greatness of faith. **Therefore from every disagreement between any one of Israel**

¹ Vayikra 19:18.

² "Orot" (Lights), p. 52. (Orot was written by Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook).

with a brother, or between every party with an opponent; all these conflicts build worlds³.

Rav Kook explains that if one party or stream from the nation is missing, the whole nation and its components are lacking an integral part of the nation's existence. "Because every part of the nation of Israel is an exceptional organ in the splendid and holy stature of 'Knesset Israel.'"⁴ "Therefore, we must depart from the narrow circle, which holds within it divided perspectives, which do not accept their opponent's existence. But we must climb up to the peak of the source of all the different views⁵, and we must broaden our minds and 'Judge favorably the whole person,' in a distant and extraordinary way⁶. In this perspective we can learn to see how we all climb up to one place, and only a change of customs, circumstances and personal character traits, differ us from each other"⁷. "Therefore we must get acquainted with each other in the name of the entire nation of Israel, and not in a specific sectarian group or party. We must know and accept the concept that in every party there is plenty of work within, to repair and to build. Together with the internal changes we must learn from each other and obtain the light and goodness which is in us all."⁸ For this reason, everything is improvement and construction of the nation and the world. Therefore, there is no need to speak bitterly. Instead, we must speak of the greatness that all the sides do to construct the immortal building of the nation of Israel, and to mend the world together⁹.

Therefore, one must love his brother despite the differences of opinions. The true intention is that unity does not necessarily mean that every one must be identical. On the contrary, different opinions and deeds lead to a healthier nation. Every individual has his own unique character traits, which help raise the whole nation. Therefore, the obligation of all the people of Israel is to unite and act in brotherhood and friendship despite the differences of opinions and deeds.¹⁰

May we all focus on the positive character traits of our fellow Jews, and not on their faults.¹¹

³ "Orot," p. 149-150.

⁴ The phrase "Knesset Israel" means "All the souls of Israel through the ages." This paragraph is based on Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook's writings (Rav Kook's Letters, no. 539). For further details on this topic, see Sefat Emet on the festivals, Shabbat Teshuvah, year 5663.

⁵ Rav Kook's Letters, vol. I, letter no. 84.

⁶ Rav Kook's Letters, vol. I, letter no. 539.

⁷ Rav Kook's Letters, vol. I, letter no. 84.

⁸ Rav Kook's articles, vol. I, p. 77.

⁹ "Orot," p. 149-150.

¹⁰ According to "In the Paths of Redemption," p. 139.

¹¹ Rabbi Elimelech from Lizance.