

Breaking Idols – Re'ei

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אלה החקים והמשפטים אשר תשמרון לעשות בארץ אשר נתן ה' א-לקי אבותיך לך לרשתה כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה. אבד תאבדון את כל המקמות אשר עבדו שם הגוים אשר אתם ירשים אתם את אלהיהם על ההרים הרמים ועל הגבעות ותחת כל עץ רענן. ונתצתם את מזבחתם ושברתם את מצבתם ואשריהם תשרפון באש ופסילי אלהיהם תגדעון ואבדתם את שמם מן המקום ההוא. לא תעשו כן לה' א-לקיכם. כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' א-לקיכם מכל שבטיכם לשום את שמו שם לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה. (דברים יב, א-ה)

We all know the Midrash (בראשית רבה לח, יג) of Avraham Avinu when he was a child. Little Avram's father Terach went out for the day and left Avram in charge of his idol shop and Avram broke all the idols. When Terach returned to find all the shattered fragments of his wares all over the floor, he asked Avram what had happened. Avram replied "A lady came in with a basket of flour and she asked me to offer it as an offering to the idols. I did and then the idols began fighting with each other 'I want to eat first ... no I want to eat first'. The biggest idol took a stick and broke all the other idols!" Terach said to Avram "Are you trying to mess with me? You know very well that idols don't know how to do that!" Avram then said to his father "Let your ears hear what your lips speak!"

The above psukim in our parsha are reminiscent of that. HKB"H commands Am Yisrael – When you enter Eretz Yisrael you must *destroy* all the places of idol worship of the nations you have inherited the land from. Smash and break their altars, burn all the trees they bowed down to, uproot all their statues and erase their name from that place.

For HKB"H you must do the exact opposite. What does it mean the "opposite"? Rashi/Ramban (ibid.), quoting the Sifri, say - Do *not* erase the name of HKB"H, *nor* break even one stone of the Mizbach Ha'olah *nor* even one stone in the Azara. And could one possibly imagine that Am Yisrael would do such a thing (to break the Mizbeach)? However, the *true* meaning is - do not *follow the ways of the goyim* - which will result in the destruction of the Mikdash. Rather, gather in the place that HKB"H has chosen from all the tribes, to mark His name and there you will seek HKB"H.

At the beginning of July (תשפ"ו) there was a conference held in the Bnei Akiva Yeshiva in Nechalim, near Petach Tikva to address the "rift" between the Dati Leumi world and the Charedi world regarding the issue of conscription of Charedim in the IDF. During this conference, representatives of each sector presented the various hashkafot of the Dati Leumi sector, the Charedi sector, the Chassidic/Lubavitch sector, the Chiloni sector etc. (many of these talks can be

viewed online on Youtube – search for **כנס נחלים**), with the purpose of understanding the reasoning behind each of the hashkafot and trying to find some common ground for dialog between them.

The representative of the Charedi hashkafa was HaRav Guy Alaluf שליט"א, rav of a community in Rosh Ha'ayin and a teacher. The subject of his talk was to clarify exactly what the Charedi claim is *against* the Dati Leumi world. He emphasized that this was not necessarily his personal hashkafa (which – in his own words – is more complex), but that in some ways he does identify with it. According to HaRav Alaluf שליט"א, the central "beef" the Charedi world has with the Dati Leumi world, is that the Dati Leumi world is "secularized at its core". Not that the Dati Leumi world is "open" to the secular world to a greater or lesser degree, but that the Dati Leumi world has *totally* adopted the language, lifestyle, customs and culture of the secular world.

He brings one small, specific example of sifrei kodesh written by talmidei chachamim in the Dati Leumi world, that they embrace secular protocols, for example when listing items, they use numbers 1,2,3 etc. instead of א,ב,ג etc. He does not say it in these words, but paraphrasing him, the Dati Leumi world dresses in secular clothing, listens to secular music, watches secular TV, reads secular books and newspapers, decorates their homes in a secular fashion, studies secular curricula in school and university, etc. etc. In a nutshell – that the Dati Leumi is secularized from the core.

Later in his talk, he brings a statistic, which incidentally is ratified by the independent Israel Democratic Institute (IDI), that the percentage of "dropout" (children not continuing to live according to their parents' hashkafa when they become adults) in the Charedi world (12-15%) is *half* that of the Dati Leumi world (20-40%).

I have never really thought about it in this way. It is true! Personally speaking, I was raised as a child in South Africa watching movies of Walt Disney, enjoying Carol Burnett and Monty Python on TV, the Goon Show on the radio, listening to the Beatles, ABBA, Frank Sinatra, studying in a school (Yeshiva College) in which the day was split 50:50 between limudei kodesh (Gemara, Tanach etc.) and "secular" studies – maths, science, biology, etc., playing sports (table tennis and running).

Despite that I always considered myself *Jewish*, not only Jewish, but a *religious*, observant Jew! I wore a kipa and tzitzit, I davened three times a day, put on tefillin, ate kosher, went to shiurim, leined in shul on Shabbat, davened before the amud, taught kids to lein their bar-mitzvah parsha, worked as a mashgiach in a peach preserve factory in the summer to make some pocket money, was chazan for yamim noraim in outlying communities, etc. etc. In my eyes, this was the epitome of what a Jew is! Yes, we shared the same lifestyle and culture with the goyim in South Africa, but there was always a *clear*

distinction – we are Jewish and they are goyim. There are things they do that we would *never* do.

To hear from a representative of a Charedi hashkafa, that they do not consider me to be an "authentic Jew" at all, that they equate me with a "goy" - that was quite a revelation.

Then I began to think about it a little more.

This is "critique" from a Charedi wearing a long black coat, a white shirt and a black hat (the typical garb of a Charedi), clothing which originated in 18th/19th century Europe, and was essentially the dignified apparel of the European goyim at the time (Moshe Rabbeinu certainly never wore a black kapota and a mink fur shtreimel). Two weeks ago, I wrote about a scathing (videoed) attack of a Charedi gadol hador on the Dati Leumi world, delivered while sitting in a leather-bound swivel armchair and in front of him on the formica surface table, clearly visible is a (kosher) cellphone and a ballpoint pen. In the background are wood framed glass doors with the glass stained in patterns of flowers and leaves. The Charedi who filmed this video was obviously filming it with a cellphone camera. In other miscellaneous videos of the same rav, he can be seen talking into a microphone, davening in a shtiebel which has recessed electric spotlights in the ceiling. In another video, on a pedestal behind him a landline telephone holds pride of place. On the shelf alongside him, together with his many, many sforim, there are ring binder/lever arch files with papers.

It is clear from the above description that *even the gadol hador* of the Charedi world is living in a reality that incorporates elements of "secularization". The question is where does one draw the line? To be an "authentic" Jew, do we have to live in tents, with candles for light, donkeys and camels for transport, robes and sandals for clothing? Like Am Yisrael in the Midbar?

To what *degree* do we have to "smash", "destroy" and "erase" every vestige and symbol of the goyim that they created and, in many ways "idolize" or "serve" to a greater or lesser degree? Where does one draw the line? Is there a line, or is it simply black and white, all or nothing? This is the topic I would like to address in this week's shiur.

The first question to answer is "Is there a carte blanche prohibition on becoming involved in *anything* the goyim do or create?"

There are numerous sources that say – no such carte blanche prohibition exists!

The Mishna (יד, אבות ב) says רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר הָיִי שֶׁקוֹד לְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה וְדַע מָה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹס ... וכו'. The Rambam on that Mishna says R' Elazar was teaching us that you need to *learn things* that will enable you to respond to an

apikores from the nations and refute what they say. The Rambam adds a caveat that when you learn the ways of the goyim, for the purpose of being able to challenge and refute an apikores, be sure that *none of these ways of the goyim will impact your heart* and always remember before Whom you stand and Who you serve. As we know, the Rambam was also a physician, who studied the science of medicine of his time. Not only gedolei hador need to be able to refute an apikores, even *regular* people, re: the stories (אִיכָה רַבָּה א, ו; ט) of children in Yerushalayim debating wise men of Athens and defeating them.

A contemporary example of this immediately springs to mind – HaRav Tovia Singer שליט"א who confronts apikorsim from the Christian world and refutes their claims. His knowledge of Christianity surpasses many of the Christian clergy he debates with.

Another example in the Gemara (יומא לח, ע"א) tells us that after the chachamim fired Beit Garmu for not revealing the secret of the Lechem HaPanim, they brought expert goy bakers from Alexandria to replace Beit Garmu. If the chachamim thought they were not allowed to learn wisdom of the goyim, they would not have gone to the Alexandrian bakers in the first place. As it turns out the baking knowledge of the Alexandrian bakers paralleled that of Beit Garmu, but Beit Garmu had something the Egyptian bakers did not – siyata di'Shmaya and that is why the Alexandrian bakers failed, not because they lacked knowledge. מִסְתַּמָּא according to this Gemara, that Lechem HaPanim in the Beit HaMikdash may even be prepared by goyim expert bakers. We know from the same Gemara, a page or two before, that the doors of Sha'ar Nikanor in the 2nd Beit HaMikdash were made by goy Alexandrian expert metalworkers.

Another example. The Gemara (בבא קמא נב, ע"ב-פג, ע"א) says "Cursed is someone who teaches his son Greek wisdom". The Gemara asks "Is it really forbidden to learn Greek wisdom? R' Yehuda HaNasi says that in Eretz Yisrael one should speak either Lashon HaKodesh or the Greek language?" The Gemara answers "There is a difference between the Greek language and Greek wisdom – language is permitted and wisdom is prohibited". The Gemara then brings Shmuel quoting Rabban Gamliel that it is *permitted* to study Greek wisdom?? and the Gemara replies "Yes, for Rabban Gamliel and the members of his household it was permitted because they had close ties with the government". This knowledge was necessary for them to represent Am Yisrael with the powers that be.

From this Gemara it is clear that speaking the language of the goyim is not forbidden at all, and in certain circumstances it is permitted to study their wisdom. Those who interact with the administration of the goyim (in any generation) need to know their ways in order to be able to deal with them.

The Rivash (תשובות הריב"ש בסימן מ"ה) says that the prohibition of learning Greek "wisdom" in the Gemara above does not refer to the sciences, but

only to hypocritical philosophy and culture. And *even those* are permitted for someone who has studied the entire Torah (like the Rambam who studied Greek philosophy to refute their claims - in Moreh Nevuchim).

Another Gemara (סנהדרין יז, ע"א) corroborates the language issue, that the members of the Sanhedrin had to be well versed in 70 languages, that they could understand these languages without the use of an interpreter (to hear direct testimony from witnesses in these languages, not through an interpreter). They also had to be well versed in all forms of sorcery and witchcraft so that they could judge sorcerers.

The Gemara (ראש השנה כה, ע"ב) says that Yiftach in his generation was like Shmuel HaNavi in his generation, which teaches us that the leader of any generation, great or small (compared to previous generations) needs to fully understand the reality of the generation he lives in, he needs to fully understand everything about them – their culture, customs, wisdom, etc.

The Midrash (איכה רבה ב, יג) says that if someone tells you that the goyim have wisdom, you should believe them, but if they say the goyim have Torah, do not believe them.

The Gemara (עבודה זרה מ ע"ב) says that once Rebi Yehuda HaNasi had problems with his stomach. He asked if anyone knew if apple cider of the goyim (known to cure this ailment) was permitted or not. R' Shmuel bar Yossi said that once his father had a stomach ache and they brought him apple cider of the goyim, 70-year-old vintage – and it cured him. They looked around and found a goy who had 70-year-old apple cider and Rebi drank it and was cured. Rebi said "Baruch Hashem Who gave His world to the שומרים". In other words, an admission and acknowledgement that HKB"H does not limit His wisdom only to Am Yisrael, He also gives it to the goyim.

The Gemara (ברכות נח, ע"א) says that if someone sees a wise man of the goyim, he must make a bracha שְׁנֵיתֵינוּ מִחֻכְמָתוֹ לְבָשָׁר וְדָם.

Rishonim and Acharonim had absolutely no problem with learning the wisdom of the goyim.

The Rambam studied medicine from the great physicians of the time, such as the Greek physician Claudius Galenus.

The Meiri believed that wisdom is a gift to all mankind and whenever something is a truth, it doesn't matter who brings it, we should accept it.

The Vilna Gaon said כְּפִי מֶה שֶׁיִּחְסֹר לְאָדָם יְדִיעוֹת מְשֻׁאָרֵי הַחֻכְמוֹת לְעוֹמֵת זֶה, that the wisdom of the goyim is essential to fully understanding the Torah.

The Aruch HaShulchan (יו"ד סימן רמו סעיף טז) says that it is permissible to study the wisdom of the goyim as long as it is not heresy against HKB"H and the Torah. The Rema (יו"ד סימן רמו סעיף ד) paskens like the Aruch HaShulchan above.

That's regarding learning the ways of the goyim, what about dressing like the goyim?

There are no halachot regarding exactly what *style* of clothes to wear. It certainly does not say in Shulchan Aruch/Rema that one should dress specifically in the common Charedi garb of today (which is in fact not derived from Jewish sources, but rather from the fashion of the goyim in Europe in the 18th and 19th century – the *dignified* clothing of the goyim – long pants, long shirt, jacket and hat). The only thing the Rema (או"ח ב, ו) adds is that the clothes should cover the whole body and not to walk around barefoot. The Igrot Moshe (יו"ד ח"ג סימן) (סח) says that fully covering the entire body is only a *מִנְדַּת חֻסְדִּיּוּת* and in places where the *custom is not to cover* the entire body it is *not even* a *מִנְדַּת חֻסְדִּיּוּת* to fully cover the body. R' Moshe Feinstein brings proofs there related to the minimal clothing required to say Kriat Shema and Shmoneh Esrei.

There is no chiyuv de'oraita for a man to cover his head, unless he is a kohen doing avodah in the Mikdash (migba'at/mitznefet). The first time the word kipa is mentioned is in the Gemara (חולין קלח, ע"א) in reference to this hat of the kohen. The Shulchan Aruch/Rema certainly do not say that a man needs to cover their head in a black velvet kipa nor in a mink fur shtreimel. The Rema (או"ח ב, ו) says that covering one's head is only a *מִנְדַּת חֻסְדִּיּוּת*, based on Rambam (הל' דעות פ"ה ה"ו). However, over time this *מִנְדַּת חֻסְדִּיּוּת* spread throughout Am Yisrael and has become a *מִנְהַג מְחֻיָּב*, re: Shulchan Aruch (סימן ג, צא), Mishna Brura and שו"ת יחוה דעת.

Regarding the size of the kipa, R' Shlomo Kluger says that it should be big enough to cover most of the head. However, the Igrot Moshe (או"ח ח"א א') says that this is not mechayev and it does not need to cover most of the head, it is sufficient if the head appears to be "covered" (no specific percentage). None of the poskim deal with the fabric the kipa is made of. It makes not one iota of difference if it is a black velvet kipa or a crocheted kipa (kipa sruga). A wise man in the shul I grew up in once told me that your kipa reflects the size of your brain. What does that say about some people who wear "pea" sized kippot that you need a microscope to see?

Is one allowed to listen to the music of the goyim? The principle of the wisdom of the goyim above applies equally to music. There is a distinct isur to listen to music that is used for avoda zara (e.g. church music, Hindu religious music etc.) Similarly (שו"ע, אבן העזר סימן כה, א), it is not permitted to listen to שִׁירֵי עֲגָבִים of the goyim, music/songs that will lead to פְּרִיצוּת and שְׁחֻק. Similarly

for negative music with foul language, violence, hate, heresy etc. This does not rule out *all* the music of the goyim in any way. Music of the goyim that is positive and inspiring is certainly permitted, including classical music (upon which many a Chassidic march is based), as well as many contemporary songs which have been adapted into Chassidic songs, listened to by throngs of Charedim lemehadrin at Shwekey and MBD concerts. Some of the biggest contemporary poskim (הגרי"ש אלישיב; הגרי"ז מבריסק) permit listening to *recorded* (not live) music (tapes/cd/mp3/internet/etc.) with *women* singing and pasken that this is not begeder אִשָּׁה – as long as the content is appropriate as above. There are some who are machmir (R' Vosner, R' Sternbuch, R' Mutzafi, etc.).

When you examine the halacha legufo shel inyan, as we have above, the supposed "Charedi" claim of HaRav Alaluf שליט"א that the Dati Leumi world is completely secularized and by inference – *breaking the halacha*, is clearly not accurate at all.

The question is if Walt Disney, Monty Python, the Goon Show, ABBA, the Beatles, etc. is required curriculum for Torah study? Is it productive or *destructive*? Speaking from personal experience, having been exposed to all these "outside influences", I believe it depends on what you do with them. There is no doubt that we have something to learn from all the above.

I certainly would *not* learn life philosophy from Walt Disney, but I certainly *would* learn the art of storytelling from him. HKB"H gave wisdom also to the goyim and he gave Walt Disney the gift of perfecting the art of storytelling to children. If you study and learn from that art and use it to teach your children (or if you are a teacher – other children) *appropriate Torah content*, stories of tzaddikim, the avot and the imahot etc. your teaching will be *substantially more effective*.

HKB"H gave the wisdom of perfecting the art of humor to people like John Cleese from Monty Python, to Peter Sellers from the Goon Show and others. These people were born with a gift of the wisdom of humor from HKB"H. If we learn from this wisdom and apply it in the appropriate framework, it can work wonders in our relationships with others. If we can learn to laugh at *ourselves* (not at others), we will have developed a resilience of personality that is undefeatable. We learn the art of self-deprecating humor from HKB"H Himself. In the episode of Tanur Achnai (בבא מציעא נט, ע"ב) HKB"H performs miracle after miracle to prove R' Eliezer's shita is right. HKB"H sends down a *bat kol* to declare that R' Eliezer is right, but in the end R' Yehoshua says "Sorry HKB"H, but You gave us the power *down here* to formulate halacha according to majority opinion, and *this* is our ruling". What was HKB"H's response? קָא חַיִּידִי וְאַמֵּר נִצְחוֹנִי בְּנִי. נִצְחוֹנִי בְּנִי. Learning the art of humor from the experts is an *essential life skill*, it can save many a marriage and many a friendship.

HKB"H gave the wisdom of music to goyim as well as to Am Yisrael. We have much to learn from this wisdom, whether it be from ABBA, the Beatles or Beethoven. Chassidei Modzhitz adapted many a waltz or a march in their niggunim. Dedi Graucher z"l, a famous Chassidic music singer, adapted ABBA's "The Winner Takes It All" and turned it into a famous rendition of "Ani Ma'amin".

The secret formula for incorporating wisdom of the goyim is to not dispose of baby with the bathwater, not to ban and shut out *everything* of the goyim. The Mishna teaches us how to deal with it *שְׁמוּצִיָּאָה אֶת הַקֶּמַח וְקוֹלָטָתָא* (אבות ה, טו) *הַסֵּלֶת (אבות ה, טו)*. Chas vechalila that we should take the wisdom of the goyim "as is". We need to sift it, extract and apply the good parts and discard the bad. HKB"H gave wisdom to the goyim, it is from HKB"H – we have to learn to identify it and extract it correctly.

Moshe Rabbeinu received his childhood education in the house of Pharaoh. He was certainly exposed to the Monty Python, ABBA, Walt Disney and the Manchester United *of his era*. It was *essential* for Moshe Rabbeinu to grow up in such an environment to acquire the wisdom of the goyim that would enable him to become the leader of a nation (מלבי"ם, שמות ב, י). If he had remained a slave with the rest of his brethren or had studied in yeshiva from birth, he would never have acquired those skills.

It is a statistical fact that the dropout rate in the Dati Leumi world is double that of the Charedi world, but that is not imho because of the "content factor", but rather the "fear factor".

It is clear that the Charedi world is more fearful of its leaders than the Dati Leumi world and that is a *good* thing (אבות ד, יב). I believe that the Dati Leumi world *does not* hold its leaders in high enough esteem and that filters down to the kids. The Dati Leumi world unwittingly has come to "accept" that its leaders are in some way "inferior" or "second-rate" compared to those in the Charedi world, which is not true. The Dati Leumi world is less hierarchical than the Charedi world and this needs to be rectified. In the Charedi world, there is only one "gadol hador", in the Dati Leumi world there are more than one and this leads to confusion. Each tribe needs one "nasi", not multiple nesi'im. In this the Charedim have it right.

Many have studied "dropout rates" in various sectors, however, I do not believe that any have ever studied how many of these dropouts, *eventually return* to the "fold" of their upbringing ... later in life. I believe that many have and it has less to do with education than with *love*.

Some people need to take a windy path to reach their destination and there is no way to "fast track" it. Some of us, including myself, need to explore many different experiences, take different turns in life, including some wrong turns ... in order to develop the life skills necessary to achieve their G-d given

purpose. Each life experience builds another layer in the personality that completes the final puzzle. I highly recommend that you watch this [video](#) of HaRav Yigal Levinstein שליט"א about his daughter. It is required viewing for every parent.

At its root, the hashkafa difference between the Charedim and the Dati Leumi worlds is based on one thing alone. Should we fear the "world" or not?

The Charedi hashkafa is based on *total fear* of the outside world and demands erecting high walls around themselves to shut it out, leaving them secluded in a "protected" cocoon which is never 100% hermetic. They try to delude themselves it is, but it has inescapable elements of outside-worldly influences. It is a hashkafa that at its core suffers from insecurity. Insecurity of the intrinsic צדקת הדרך of the hashkafa. If it was secure in its צדקת הדרך, it would not be afraid of putting that to the test. If the Charedi derech was that righteous and totally impregnable, it would not be threatened by sending avreichim to serve in the IDF. If an avrech leaves the IDF less Charedi than when he went in, it means that the Charedi world did not prepare their children for the real world. Yaakov Avinu prepared for 14 years in yeshivat Shem ve'Ever before going down to the hostile environment in the house of Lavan in Charan. The Charedi world has an equivalent time to prepare their youth for a similar "encounter" with the real world.

There is no question that the Charedi world is less "connected" to the physical, secular world than the Dati Leumi world. There is also no question that the Charedi world has achieved great heights in Torah study (albeit no greater than those achieved by talmidei chachamim in the Dati Leumi world, just different). When one exists in such "high realms", the physical, secular world assumes lesser importance and the danger of detachment can become a real problem.

When Rashbi and his son exited the cave after 12 years of total seclusion from the outside world, they had acquired a priceless gem – the Torat HaNistar (later to be immortalized in the Zohar). However, their new mindset in such pure, holy realms caused them to "burn everything they laid their eyes on" (שבת לג, (ע"ב). They observed people going about their daily lives and to them it seemed so mundane and unfitting, they could not coexist with such a reality. HKB"H said to them "Have you exited the cave to burn My world? Go back to the cave!" Rashbi and his son R' Elazar had to return to the cave for another 12 months to learn how to continue to coexist in this lower level, mundane world after they had been exposed to such holiness. In order for Rashbi to be able to pass his new knowledge of the Torat HaNistar on to future generations, they needed to learn the art of הוֹי דִּן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת (אבות א, ו).

What is the good of all this elevated level of Torah study in the Charedi world if they look upon the more "mundane" levels in Am Yisrael and "burn

everything their eyes see"? Am Yisrael is thirsty for their Torah, now more than ever before. They just need to acquire the additional skill set of another 12 months "in the cave" to learn *הָיוּ דֵן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לִכְף זְכוּת*, in order that their wonderful Torah can become *נִחְלָת הַכָּל* and be shared with the rest of Am Yisrael.

The Dati Leumi world is based on *embracing* the outside world and lifting it up in spirituality. Using the wisdom of the goyim when applicable and injecting light and kedusha into it. If the Dati Leumi world has a flaw, it is *overconfidence* in its hashkafa. The assumption that it is so "righteous" - that it is impregnable. This sometimes results in exposure to spiritually damaging influences (e.g internet, smartphones, etc.) before the children are ready for them and before they have the adequate tools to deal with them. The Dati Leumi world is more "liberal" in nature (not the WOKE progressive liberalism chas vechalila, but the Hillel style liberalism), trying to do things bedarchei no'am and in a non-confrontational manner. This is a double-edged sword, because sometimes it promotes positive healing in Am Yisrael, but sometimes there are cases where confrontation is unavoidable and the Dati Leumi world shies away from this confrontation.

In essence, the Charedi and Dati Leumi hashkafot are not that different from one another. They both seek the same goal, but the one suffers from insecurity while the other suffers from overconfidence. They both have what to learn from the other. The Dati Leumi world can learn a lot about *יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם* from the Charedi world and the Charedi world can learn a lot about *אַהֲבַת כָּלל יִשְׂרָאֵל* from the Dati Leumi world. Instead of *battling* with one another, it would be more productive and cause a *bigger Kiddush Hashem* for each to *learn positive things from the other* to fill the gaps in their respective hashkafot. If they do, the end result will probably be two worlds that are essentially identical.

The Torah requires us to completely destroy the avodah zara of the goyim when we enter Eretz Yisrael and to find our intrinsic "center" that is uncontaminated by the avoda zara of the goyim. However, this does not mean totally secluding ourselves from the goyim in a bubble. When the Batei Mikdash existed, every year the goyim paid pilgrimage to the Mikdash on Sukkot to give thanks to HKB"H for the bounty they enjoyed in their own countries by virtue of Am Yisrael and the Mikdash. This is the destiny of Am Yisrael - to bring tikkun to the world – including the part of the world inhabited by the goyim.

Perhaps because we did not adhere to HKB"H's admonition enough in our parsha, or because we neglected our role to be a light unto the nations and do tikkun olam *also for the goyim*, HKB"H dispersed us for almost 2000 years of exile *amongst* the goyim, who *suffered just as much in the last 2000 years as we have* due to absence of the Beit HaMikdash in the world. It was a wakeup call to Am Yisrael and the goyim alike, at the same time! These last almost 2000 years of global suffering have been a learning curve, both for us, Am Yisrael and also

for the rest of the world and this learning curve is converging now to a point as we approach the Geulah. The entire world is shifting inexorably to one end point.

We want to achieve tikkun olam, but first we need to do "tikkun ha'bayit", to get our own house in order. You can hardly heal the world when your own home is in disarray.

Hopefully HKB"H will give us the strength to bring this to fruition. The Nechalim conference was a good start. First, we need to be educated and understand the metziut, the reality - and not be blinded by the hype bandied about by politicians with interests.

We all need to do bedek bayit, each one in their own daled amot, realizing that none of us are perfect and then working tirelessly to get our houses in order through reconciliation and common purpose.

בב"א

Shabbat Shalom

Eliezer Meir Saidel

Machon Lechem Hapanim

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