

An object whose dimensions are nonspecific is relegated to the general status of its collective totality. However, when the object's dimensions become specified, it attains an individuality that severs it from the collective. As in the case of unspecified wheat in a silo which is regarded as part of the "crop". However, when the wheat in a silo is weighed and specified it is no longer part of the "crop" but rather a particular number of "bushels of wheat".

HaShem's command to Moshe to count all the men of military age, filled two Godly purposes:

1- Until the counting, Am Yisrael, whose numbers were non-specific, was part of a universal collective known as "Mankind". When the final tally of 603,550 men of military age between 20-60 was completed, who comprises the essential part of any nation was determined. The Jews who left Egypt attained their individuality and became severed from the universal collective of Mankind to become HaShem's unique chosen people.

2- The census not only severed the Jews from Mankind, but also created a new category that never before existed. And as a new, independent category it was blessed in a manner specific to the sacred characteristics the Jewish nation inherited from our holy ancestors.

Unique Singularity

The Gemara (Brachot 6a) relates the mutual expressions of love and understanding between the infinite Creator and the finite epitome of HaShem's creations – Am Yisrael. We express our recognition of HaShem's essential, particular characteristic as "oneness" and "unique singularity" when we say:

יְהוָה יְהוָה - אִי ה' אִי ה' אִי ה'

Comprehend Yisrael, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And the Holy One Be He expresses his recognition of Am Yisrael's singularity by His statement:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין כָּמוֹהָ עַם יְחִידָא דְעָלְמָא דְלִי

And who is like your people Israel – a singularly unique nation in the land.

Am Yisrael's particular characteristic of "unique singularity" is the compounded blend of family, race, religion and nationality fused together by common historical experience. If anyone of these four components is lacking, then our unique singularity vanishes into oblivion and we return to the unsanctified collective called Mankind.

Our "unique singularity" of family, race, religion and nationality fused together by common historical experience is manifested only in Eretz Yisrael. It was only after 40 years of preparation and Torah study in the desert, under the tutelage of Moshe Rabbeinu, that we were qualified to enter the Holy Land to assume our active role as HaShem's ambassadors to a morally corrupt and failed Mankind.

Because of our failure to live up to the high standards of Torah conduct, HaShem sent us into exile. First to Babylon for 70 years, and then the Roman exile of 2000 years which, by definition, culminated with the passing of the Medina's first official law – the "Law of Return", which affords immediate Israeli citizenship to every returning Jew.

The "unique singularity" of a Jew cannot express itself in the galut.

We in Eretz Yisrael are not family to the Jews in the galut. A family unit has shared experiences and emotions of happiness and sorrow, celebrations and disappointments. When a mortar shell falls in the western Negev all Israel recoils, but it is not felt by a Jew in Kansas or in Johannesburg.

A nation is defined by shared borders and common language. The western border of Israel lies somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, it does not extend to Providence, Rhode Island or to the Jericho Turnpike.

Our language is the language of the Torah and our linguistic associations are not to the NBA or to Hollywood. The basic bond that joins a nation together is its language. The mother tongue of the galut Jew is the language of his birthplace while our children speak Ivrit.

We don't even share the same religion. The mitzvot which are in affect here are not to be found in the galut. Not only are the agricultural laws of Shemita, Teruma and Maaser, etc, not in effect in the galut but even the determination of the fundamental laws of Shabbat and kashrut are different, as stated by the illustrious Ramban. HaShem gave the Torah to be fulfilled in Eretz Yisrael, the mitzvot in the galut are in effect in a preparatory capacity so that one should not forget how the mitzvot are kept upon returning to the Holy land.

But probably the most essential bond between members of a nation is the subjective feeling of belonging one to the other, to the land, the culture, the flag and to the national anthem.

The vast majority of Jews in the US, including the young orthodox, truly feel that the US is their country, their culture, their feelings of brotherhood. The land where, if need be, they would serve in the military and die for the Stars and Stripes.

The younger generation of Jews, including the orthodox, feel no particular kinship with the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. The Satmar and their followers have done an amazing job in indoctrinating the Jews of the US in distancing themselves from the Holy Land, bordering on hatred of anything that smacks of the word "Israel".

In conclusion a short story:

The husband was behind the wheel and his wife sat near the window. She said to him, "When we were first married we sat so close to each other. Now look where we are sitting".

And her husband replied, "I didn't move".

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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