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A Prayer For Unity

We daven in *Shemoneh Esrei*, וקבצינו יחד, “*And gather us together.*” We are asking Hashem not only that we should all become gathered together again, bit by bit, but rather, that we should all come back יחד, “together”, in unison.

Let us try to understand what this concept is - that the gathering of our dispersed must happen only if we can all come back together and in unison.

The Abilities of Truth and Peace

We find two great people who led our nation.^[1] One leader was Moshe Rabbeinu. “*Moshe is true, and His Torah is true.*” Moshe represents the trait of *emes*, the absolute truth. We also find that Aharon at one point led the nation; this was when Moshe was temporarily absent. Aharon is called the “*pursuer of peace and lover of peace.*”

What was the difference between the way that Moshe led the nation, with the way Aharon led the nation? When Aharon led the nation, the people pressured him to allow the Golden Calf, and he listened to them. He was mainly concerned that there should be peace among the nation, so he listened to their requests; the people were able to sway him and get him to listen to their demands. But Moshe would not budge under any pressure, and he only followed absolute truth. For example, when he saw the people sinning with the Calf, he immediately shattered the *Luchos*.

Both Moshe and Aharon possessed their own unique traits, and Chazal learn from this that there are two ways how to lead the nation. One way is through truth, and the other way is through peace. In actuality, both abilities are needed, for it is written, “*Truth and peace together.*” We need both the abilities of truth and peace, together, or else we will be sorely mistaken.

We are not, *chas v’shalom*, speaking disparagingly about the approaches of either Moshe (the emphasis on truth) or Aharon (the emphasis on peace). We are speaking about *ourselves* - that it is *we* who have to use both the abilities of truth and peace, or else we will be imbalanced and wreak havoc upon the world and upon ourselves.

When Truth Is Without Peace

If only truth reigns and there is never consideration to make peace with others’ differences, then the world would be a very harsh place. Truth cannot stand anything that isn’t the total truth; it would

cause disparity in the world. If all we would do is emphasize the truth, we would come to hate people who do not live a life of truth. We would come to hate people who don't keep mitzvos, and we would hate all the other nations of the world, in our pursuit of truth. This is not the will of Hashem.

So although we need to pursue the truth, the truth also needs to be balanced out with some "peace", or else the truth would destroy everything that doesn't meet up to its standards.

Thus, although we must pursue the truth – the *middah* of Moshe Rabbeinu, which is *emes* – that does not mean that we should only emphasize *emes*. We need to have *shalom* also in our life, besides for *emes*. Chazal say that a person has to get along with people; one should be "*daato me'ureves im habriyos.*" We need to be at peace with others, even if they do improper things and don't live their life the right way. If we only pursue *emes* and we never pursue *shalom*, we are missing *Ahavas Yisrael*.

We all need to utilize **both** the traits of Moshe and Aharon together, because truth without peace would create both disparity within our own ranks and towards the other nations of the world.

When Peace Is Without Truth

On the other hand, if peace would be everything, and there would be no emphasis on truth, a person would constantly be in spiritual danger, because he would become susceptible to all kinds of evil influences, since he connects with everyone without any restrictions. He would go too far with his love and embrace everyone in the world, and he would end up becoming attached to the evil that other people commit, all in the name of having peace with others.

Thus, truth without peace is one kind of evil imbalance. We need to be at peace with others and love others. But the other extreme is also bad – if we only seek peace and love with others, and we don't pursue the truth, then our spirituality is in danger. We need a proper balance between our abilities of peace and truth.

In previous generations, there were those who fought entirely for the truth, but their *Ahavas Yisrael* was missing. On the other side of the coin, there were those who had tremendous *Ahavas Yisrael*, and they were not balanced out with pursuing the truth; as a result, they bonded with evil, with those who did not go in the way of Torah, and their spiritual level declined.

We need a balance of both the abilities of Moshe\truth and Aharon\peace. One without the other presents a danger.

The Abundance of "Peace" In Our Generation

In our generation, it is hard to find someone who is very extreme when it comes to *emes*. You can have a person who is so removed from this physical world that he lives a completely spiritual kind of life, but this is very rare to find these days. We can't find too many people who are burning so much with truth that they totally disconnect from the world.

But, what *is* very common nowadays, is that there are people who are natural peace-lovers, and by nature they are loving and friendly towards others. When people go extreme with their peaceful nature, they will connect with anyone they come across – and their spirituality suffers a decline, because they end up connecting with evil as well. They connect and feel with others' impure actions and thoughts, all in the name of peace and love. A person like this will connect even to the most wicked people in the generation, which connects him to the 50th level of impurity, (*rachmana litzlan*)!

When a person has a very peaceful nature, he needs to balance himself out with some truth as well. He needs to develop the trait of *emes*, to pursue truth. If he develops his *emes*, he will be able to

connect with others and not be affected by them. Moshe Rabbeinu was connected to the entire Jewish people in his heart, without being harmed by any evil actions going on, because he had already perfected his *emes*. With *emes*, a person can connect with others and have *shalom* with them without suffering a decline in his spirituality. But without developing a firm ability of *emes*, a person is in danger when he connects with other people.

Most of the “*shalom*” (“peace”) that people are seeking nowadays is imbalanced. When a Jew is all-loving and all-embracing, this is not the true *middah* of *shalom* that comes from a Jew’s *neshamah*, but it is rather a base kind of “peace” that stems from our *nefesh hebeheimis*, the lower and animalistic part of our soul. Although we can call it “peace”, this doesn’t make it “*shalom*”; it is not true *shalom*, because it is not aligned with the Torah’s values. *Shalom* is only considered to be true *shalom* if it is not causing a person to overstep the Torah’s boundaries.

In fact, even if someone does contain the true kind of *shalom* which comes from the *neshamah* of a Jew, he is still in spiritual danger, if he allows himself to connect to every single person he comes across.

Most people, though, haven’t revealed their higher power of *shalom* that comes from the *neshamah*, and they only know of the superficial kind of *shalom*, which stems from our *nefesh hebeheimis*. This is not “*shalom*”, even though it looks like it. The world calls it *shalom*\peace or *ahavah*\love, but that doesn’t make it to be the true kind of *shalom*.

If a person does not seek to develop his power of *emes* – if he doesn’t feel the truth burning in him every day, if he doesn’t feel it getting sharper and stronger every day, then if he seeks *shalom* with others, his entire spiritual situation is in danger. His pursuit of *shalom* resembles the kind of *shalom* that Esav made with Yaakov; it was only superficial.

In our current generation, there is more danger to our spirituality than ever, much more than the previous generations. When Moshiach comes, there will be truth revealed upon the world, and there will be peace too – but it will be a kind of peace that is truthful. And that will be the universal peace that comes to the world – a peace that is connected with truth. It will be a whole different kind of “*shalom*” than the kind of “*shalom*” that we see going on in the world today.

This is the depth behind what we ask for in *Shemoneh Esrei*, **וּקְבִצֵנוּ יחד** - that we be gathered “together”, in an inner way – in a way that both truth and peace are connected together.

Technology - Connections That Do Not Bring Unity

In our generation, it has become so easy to connect with others. Technology has made it possible to connect to another in the blink of an eye. It’s not a coincidence that in our current generation, connection with others has become so easy. What is the reason for this? (Everything has good and evil contained in it; we won’t get it here into how technology is good and how it is bad. That’s not the point. Rather, we will focus on the root of this matter.)

It appears that technology makes it possible for us to make so many “friends” with everyone. On the surface, it seems that through technology, it has become so much easier to form connections with others. But the truth is: It only causes more distance between people!

This is the entire idea of exile: we are amidst disparity with each other. The more people mix with each other, the more we it seems like we are constantly making “peace” with others, the more we grow apart from each other. The strife amongst us gets worse and worse through all of these attempts to be make connections with each other, and the truth is, that the closer we are to Moshiach’s arrival, the more disparity goes on in the world. Because we can “connect” so easily with

others in a flash, the more opportunities there are for strife and arguing amongst people!

The falsity of the world keeps increasing, with the more and more that exile goes on. The closer we are to Moshiach, the falsity intensifies. The depth of the falsity going on in the world is that things that are really false appear to be truth. That is the depth of falsity – it makes people that a lie is really the truth. This is the meaning of the statement of our Sages that in the era preceding Moshiach, “Truth will be concealed.”

In today’s era, people appear to be making friends so quickly and forming so many connections, but it’s all disparity in a disguise. It looks like it’s really peace, but it’s really falsity. All of these “connections” with others are really fake; in our generation, there is a tremendous *kelipah* (evil “husk”) of strife that has entered the world, and this works together with the *kelipah* of falsity that is also going on in our current era.

We can see this apparent from what goes on between countries. The more that the nations of the world seek to have “*shalom*” with each other – the more they get into strife with each other.

Technological advances, which seem to have increased *shalom* amongst people, are actually responsible for the greatest causes of strife and bitter arguments amongst people.

If we really want peace in the world, we need to seek *emes* along with it, and then the peace will be a real peace – it will be a truthful kind of peace.

Checking Ourselves

In this generation especially, we need to make a self-introspection and see if we have an imbalance in our ability of peace or in our ability of truth. We need to make sure that our *emes* isn’t overpowering our *shalom*, and we also need to make sure that our *shalom* isn’t overpowering our *emes*. If a person sees that one of these abilities is getting more dominant, then either his *emes* is lacking *shalom*, or his *shalom* is lacking *emes* to it, and he needs to balance himself out with the other ability he’s missing.

It is only when the truth burns in one’s heart and strengthens each day that a person can come to have the real and true *shalom* with others.

[\[1\]](#) Sanhedrin 16a