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All of Creation Will Recognize Hashem

וכל החיים יודוך סלה - **“And all the living shall give thanks to You, *selah*.”** In this section of the *Modim* blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say that the entire world shall express thanks to Hashem, a description of the future, in which all of Creation will recognize Hashem.

In the beginning of *Modim*, we say, “We give thanks to You, for You are our G-d.” We express thanks to Hashem that He is “our G-d”, which implies that we, the Jewish people, are thanking Hashem. But in the later part of the blessing of *Modim*, we say that “all the living” shall praise Hashem, which implies that the rest of Creation as well gives thanks to Hashem.

The power to express gratitude to Hashem stems from the tribe of Yehudah, whose name comes from the word *hodaah* (thanks), and his power of *hodaah* spreads from *Klal Yisrael* into the rest of the world, including the gentile nations of the world.

Rashi states that the *Shema* declares Hashem as “our G-d”, implying the G-d of the Jewish people, but in the future Hashem will be “one” over the entire world, including all the nations. In the prayer of *Aleinu* as well, we express how in the future, all the nations will recognize and know of Hashem; “for to You every knee will bow.” In addition, in the *tefillos* of the *Yomim Noraim*, we describe how in the future, all nations will declare Hashem as King.

The History of The Jewish People

When Hashem first created the world, He created only *Adam HaRishon*’s soul, and there were no divisions yet of a Jewish people and other nations of the world. Although the *sefarim hakodeshim* state that all souls were included in Adam’s soul, Jew and gentile alike, which implies that there was already a division from before, this division between Jews and gentiles was not yet made in the revealed reality, and it only existed as a hidden dimension^[1].

In the reality before us, there was no division yet between the Jewish people and the gentiles, in the beginning of history. There was Adam, then Chavah, [then Kayin and Hevel], then Shem, and then the generation of Enosh. There still wasn’t yet a creation of a Jewish people.

Then Avraham Avinu came, a man who recognized G-d, and he spread the knowledge of Him onto the world. This began the roots of a division between a people of G-d with other nations of the worlds: Avraham was against the entire world; he was the only one who believed in G-d, whereas the rest of the world did not believe.

In the merit of his great achievement, Avraham Avinu was told by Hashem that he will be designated to be made into a nation. He was told by Hashem to leave his homeland, to leave his wicked father Terach, which can also be understood on a deeper level as a separation from the nations of the world in order to be made into a unique nation.

The Jewish people are thus separated from the nations of the world, as they are designated by Hashem to be a separate nation and fulfill the purpose that Hashem has specially planned.

The Separation From Gentiles In Place, Time, and Soul

The separation of Jews from gentiles exists not only in history, but it exists as well in the dimensions of time, place and soul as well (based on the principle of "*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*" - everything exists in three planes: place, time, and soul).

The "time" where we are separated from gentiles is Shabbos. A gentile is not allowed to keep Shabbos, and if he does, he is liable to capital punishment. Shabbos is called the "*bris*"^[2] between the Jewish people and Hashem, so it is unique to the Jewish people and serves as a separation between the Jewish nation and the other nations.

We are separated from gentiles as well in "place". Avraham Avinu was told to leave his homeland and birthplace and go to Eretz Yisrael. This was the division between the Jewish people and the other nations that took place in the dimension of "place".

Ever since that division was made, it has become an inherently foreign concept for the Jewish people to mix with the other nations and live with them. And if the Jewish people become forced to be mixed among the nations of the world, it is called *galus* (exile).

Avraham went to Eretz Yisrael, but then he was told by Hashem to go down to Egypt, which was one of his ten trials. He had already been separated from the other nations and from his birthplace and father's home, and he had reached Eretz Yisrael, a place separate from the other nations. Although he was still a "stranger" there and he didn't yet own it, he was still separated from other nations, and therefore he faced a great test when he was told to go down to Egypt where he would have to mix with them.

Based on the rule of "*Maaseh Avos Siman L'Banim*" ("The actions of our forefathers are a sign for their children"), the fact that Avraham Avinu dwelled in Egypt was a sign that his descendants would have to endure exile, to dwell among gentiles.

At a later point, there were the "70 souls who went down to Egypt" (including Yaakov Avinu and his sons), which symbolizes the situation of exile, in which we are meant to separate from the gentile nations even as we are mixed amongst them. Exile is compared to a fetus in its mother's womb, where we are forced to be 'sustained' from the other nations of the world, where we find ourselves mixed with them in their land.

Not only does exile causes us to mix with them in the physical sense, but it causes us to be influenced by them in the internal sense. In Egypt, we did not change our names, clothing, and language. This shows us that we have the power to remain somewhat uninfluenced by the nations even as we are mixed with them. But besides for those aspects we remained firm in, we were influenced by them, for the most part.

The depth of the exodus from Egypt was that we were made separate from the nations. We were made into Hashem's chosen nation, and He made us separate not only the physical place that was Egypt and from Pharaoh, but He made us into our own nation, *Klal Yisrael*.

The Root of Anti-Semitism

This distinction was made absolute and complete in the days immediately preceding the event of *Shavuot*, where we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. The giving of the Torah clearly revealed the separation between the Jewish people and the other nations. It revealed how it *Klal Yisrael* were Hashem's "first thoughts" in Creation.

Chazal say that at *Sinai*, there was "*sinah*" that entered the nations towards the Jewish people. The Torah made us separate from the nations; it showed that the Jewish people were Hashem's chosen people, who are called the "*raishis*" (beginning) of Creation.

Realizing That We Are Different From Gentiles

That being the case, we must realize that we are totally separate from the gentiles. Chazal say the levels of existence are the non-living, plants, animals, people, and Jews. A Jew is an entirely unique creation, and he exists on a higher plane than other nations. Even the physical body of a Jew is sanctified, for it contains his Divine soul.[\[3\]](#)

So there is a vast difference between a Jew and a gentile. The separation of Jew from gentile is not just in the historical sense, but in the existential sense and even in the physical sense [to a certain extent].

Thus we thank Hashem for being "*our G-d*", which refers to the designation of the Jewish people as Hashem's chosen people, to declare Him as "*our G-d*."

Being Strong About Your Jewish Identity

(Until now, it was described "one side of the coin", though; soon we will explain "the other side of the coin").

First of all, we must make sure that we are clear of the difference between the Jewish people and the other nations. We might be aware that the Torah and its *mitzvos* are only for the Jewish people, but we might still be tempted to think that the gentiles are wiser than us. After all, the Sages state the "Wisdom is found among the nations", so we might attempt to use their wisdom to lead our lives.[\[4\]](#)

This comes from a lack of understanding of knowing how we are inherently different from them. We must be clear, both in our minds and hearts, that there is a distinction between the Jewish people and gentiles. Therefore, there is no basis to borrow ideas from them and to connect to their ideas. It is not only Torah and *mitzvos* which separate us from them; all aspects of our life are different from them.

This concept is more relevant than ever, in our own generation where there is so much confusion and a lack of the correct mentality. Many secular ideas have entered the Jewish people, to the point that it does not seem to many of us that we that different than them in our approach to life.

In the countries of the world outside of Eretz Yisrael (*chutz l'aretz*), Jews live amongst gentiles, which greatly influences them. But even in Eretz Yisrael, there are many gentile nations who have come here, dwelling with us in the physical sense as well as influencing how we think and live life.

When a Jew is clearly aware of the holiness of his soul, though, he is aware that there is a vast separation between a Jew's soul and gentile's soul, and he does not come to make the mistake of connecting to their ideologies about life.

The Other Side of the Coin

After one has made this distinction, though – and he must make sure that he is *absolutely clear* that there is this distinction – he now comes to the “other side of the coin” to think about which we are about to say.

First we will emphasize, however, that if one does not feel strong about his sense of Jewish identity, he will probably be damaged spiritually if he ponders the “other side of the coin” we’ll soon say. Only after one feels very strongly in his mind and heart that the Jewish people are separate from the gentile nations, should he attempt to internalize the following point.

The “other side of the coin” is, that although we are separate from the gentiles - both in our souls as well as in our physical body - we must still recognize that all of the nations are still *the creations of Hashem*.

Hashem supports them, feeds them, and keeps them alive; He wants them to live, for they are part of His plan. Hashem has kept the gentiles alive for thousands of years, so He obviously wants them to live and He has a purpose for their existence. We know that in the future, the entire world will recognize Hashem, and that includes all the gentile nations of the world.

So after one has become clear that there is a difference between a Jew and a gentile, he must also realize that all the gentiles are the creations of Hashem. This gives a person an inner perspective towards the nations.

Without this perspective, one might view the gentiles as being animalistic or lowly beings. This is a gross exaggeration and a distortion of the truth. We must be separate from them and we must realize that we are distinct from them, but we cannot remain so narrowed by this perspective and think that the gentiles have no worth or purpose.

Before acquiring this perspective, we must first make sure of course that we are aware of their lowly behaviors, and that their way of life is not appropriate for a Jew. After we clearly feel that distinction, though, we must then remind ourselves that they are creations of Hashem.

As an example, we should know clearly that it is forbidden to cause pain to a gentile, just as it is forbidden to pain any of Hashem’s creations. If we are not allowed to cause pain to an animal, due to the prohibition of “*tzaar baalei chaim*” (whether it’s a Biblical commandment or a Rabbinic commandment does not make a difference, because it’s still forbidden), then surely Hashem doesn’t want us to pain any of His human beings.

The Gentile Nations: Part of Hashem’s Plan

When a person has this inner perspective towards the gentile nations, he is aware that the gentile nations, too, are needed in Hashem’s plan.

Without this perspective, a person will have misconceptions about towards the gentile nations of the world. Either he will think that the gentiles are unnecessary, or that they are nothing but the root of evil, as people who get in the way of Hashem’s plan and prevent the purpose of Creation. But when a person has the true and deep perspective towards Hashem’s Creation, he receives an entirely new perspective towards the nations: that they, too, will have a part in revealing Hashem’s name upon the world.

This should not be intellectual information - it should become an internalized perspective.

It can be difficult to view the gentiles like this, being that we are pained from them and they cause us to feel like we live in a world of *he’elam* (concealment), for their influences on us are detrimental and

they obscure us from living a life of truth. Instead of wishing that the gentiles should simply disappear from the world, we need to see them as part of Hashem's plan, and that they, too, will have a part in revealing Hashem's name upon the world in the future.

How To View The Situation With The Arabs

We can give an example of how we can apply this perspective.

In our generation, included in the "70 nations of the world" are the Arabs who terrorize us. Chazal already wrote long ago that in the final generations, in the "End of Days", the nation of *Yishmael* (the Arabs, who come from Yishmael) will cause the nation of *Yisrael* (the Jewish people) great suffering, in Eretz Yisrael. This will ultimately cause us to *daven* to Hashem to be saved from them, and Hashem will hear our prayers and then bring the redemption.

Sometimes, we go through periods in Eretz Yisrael where there are waves of terror attacks, one after the other; and sometimes, the acts of terror are only every here and there. Either way, we are shaken from all the terrorist attacks. What is our reaction afterwards? How should we feel towards the Arabs?

Most people just wish they would all die. This perspective is formed because we know that the rule is "Esav hates Yaakov", and Chazal say that in the future, Esav and Yishmael will unify in order to destroy Yisrael; this is why their union is called the roots of the "*Erev Rav*" which seek to bring us down. There is a *halachah* that one is allowed to kill someone who is trying to kill him; so too, we are allowed to defend ourselves and therefore we think that it's appropriate to try to get rid of them.

That is all true from a *Halachic* perspective, with regards to trying to saving our own lives. But the inner perspective is not to wish that they would all die. The inner perspective to have towards them (after we have become clearly aware that we are distinct from the other nations) - now that we are found with gentiles, and in Eretz Yisrael especially where we are found with the Arabs - is that we must realize that it is precisely these nations of whom we say, **וכל החיים יודוך סלה**, "*And all the living shall praise You.*" The nations will one day recognize Hashem and praise Him.

Even more so, it is the descendants of Yishmael who will be a major catalyst in the revelation of Hashem's name on this world. It is they who will cause us to *daven* to Hashem, as Chazal state; which will bring the redemption, and then the world will be brought to its purpose, where everyone will recognize Hashem. If so, even the nation of Yishmael will realize the truth one day, and they will be the ones who will have major part in bringing it.

The only exception to this concept are souls of "Amalek"[\[5\]](#) and "Erev Rav"[\[6\]](#), who are considered to be "pure evil"[\[7\]](#) which cannot be rectified; these are forces which will never be able to recognize Hashem, thus, they will be destroyed totally in the future.[\[8\]](#)

But as for the other nations of the world - including the nation of *Yishmael* - we must understand they will have a part in bringing the world to its purpose, where all will recognize Hashem.

In Conclusion

So on one hand, there is "*sinah*" (hatred) that entered the nations for the Jews ever since we stood at Har Sinai, and this helps us remind ourselves that we must be feel separate from them. But on the other hand, there is an inner *avodah* on our part to see the gentiles as being creations of Hashem, who were all created in Hashem's honor; as it is written,It is written, "*It was all created in My honor.*" The *possuk* says that **all** of the creation was created in Hashem's honor - not just our nation *Yisrael*.

Thus, we say in *Shemoneh Esrei* that **all** of the living will give thanks to Hashem in the future. This will

ultimately come from the spiritual light of Yisrael, and the Torah we possess, which will rectify the other nations and cause them all to recognize Hashem and praise Him, when the time comes.

When we *daven* in *Shemoneh Esrei* the words **וְכָל הַחַיִּים יִדְוֹךָ סֵלָה**, our intention should be that the spiritual light of the Torah which we possess should be shined upon the rest of the world, which will enable all of the Creation to recognize, and praise, the One who has created this world.

[1] See ***Reaching Your Essence_01_Introduction To Jewish Spirituality***

[2] Covenant, treaty, or promise

[3] See *Chasam Sofer to Shabbos 86b*

[4] See ***Tefillah #042 - What It Means To Have Good Middos***; see also ***Tefillah #094 - Seeking Advice***; and ***Chanukah_ Light of Emunah***.

[5] See ***Erev Rav_05_Amalek Exposed***.

[6] See ***Tefillah_085_Erev Rav Today*** and ***Derashos_076_Exile of Past and Present***.

[7] Editor's Note: Elsewhere, the Rav has said that although Amalek is called "pure evil", there is a deep perspective in which one can access on Purim, where he reaches a level of faith and he does not differentiate between good and evil and he sees how even evil is "good", for ultimately, even evil has a part in bringing about the purpose of Creation; see ***Bilvavi_Part 5_ 'Getting Higher'***; and ***Bilvavi_Part 9_Chapter 3_ The Purpose of Our Doubts*** (at the end of the chapter).

[8] See *sefer Daas Tevunos* of the Ramchal

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