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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת ויחי

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפוּ וְאֵגִידָה לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים. הֲקִבְצוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם. (בראשית מט, א-ב)

And Yakov called for his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days. Gather yourselves and listen, Sons of Yakov and listen to Yisroel your father." (Bereishis 49:1-2)

This week's *Sidrah* recounts how Yakov Avinu blessed his children shortly before his death. Yakov was about to bless each *shevet* individually, tailoring his blessings to reflect their unique characters and abilities. This approach ensured that each *shevet* would be directed toward the path for which Hashem had designed them, underlining that each tribe had its own distinct mission.

Yakov called for his sons to gather using two different terms: הֲאֶסְפוּ and הֲקִבְצוּ. What do these expressions signify, and why is there a change in terminology?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites the Malbim to clarify the meaning of these words and their application in this context. The Malbim (*Yeshayah* 11:12) explains that the term אֶסְיֶפָה refers to the act of gathering components in a single place, regardless of whether they join or combine together. In contrast, the term קִבּוּץ denotes the unification of individual elements into one.

Rashi writes that Yakov intended to reveal the קץ, the End of Days, i.e. the time of Moshiach's arrival, however, the Shechinah departed from him. Initially, Yakov thought that his sons, the *shevatim*, were already completely united in harmony. Therefore, he initially requested them to הֲאֶסְפוּ – to gather around - without needing to mention that they should merge as one. Once he noticed the Shechinah leaving him, he realised that his children were not prepared or worthy for the *geulah*. He understood that for them to merit Moshiach's arrival, they still needed to unite as one, as we find that the Churban HaBayis was caused by *sinas chinam*. Consequently, he urged them: הֲקִבְצוּ - unite together, as only through this unity could the true *geulah* come about.

The Midrash echoes this message, explaining that Yakov was warning them against *machlokes* and dissension, urging them to come together as one united group. The Midrash cites the *possuk* (*Yechezkel* 37:16 – *Haftaras Vayigash*): קַח לָךְ עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתֹב עָלָיו 'לַיהוּדָה וְלַבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָיו' וְלָקַח עֵץ אֶחָד 'לְיוֹסֵף וְלְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָיו' וּכְתֹב עָלָיו 'לְיוֹסֵף וְלְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָיו'. *Take for yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yehudah and for the Children of Yisroel, his comrades'; and take one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Yosef, the wood of Ephraim and all the house of Yisroel, his comrades.'* Yechezkel was instructed to perform a symbolic action to signify the healing of a historic, centuries-long breach. Bringing these two pieces of wood, each with the names representing the two estranged kingdoms, together in one hand would symbolise Hashem's promise that, at the End of Days, the *machlokes* will cease, and all twelve *shevatim* will unite to form one kingdom again. The Midrash clarifies that only when all of Klal Yisroel are truly united as one entity can they prepare themselves for the *geulah*.

We must clarify, however, what true *achdus* and unity mean. It does not refer to everyone following the same path in serving Hashem. Instead, it embodies the idea that each person in Klal Yisroel comes together, serving Him in their own unique way. The Midrash (*Tehillim* 147:4) compares Klal Yisroel to the stars, highlighting their unique missions. The Malbim (*Bamidbar* 1:2) elaborates on this idea, explaining that just as every individual needs 248 limbs and 365 sinews to survive, the world also requires a specific number of stars. If even one star were missing, it would be akin to a person missing a limb or a sinew. While each limb has a different function and purpose, they are all essential to the makeup of a person. Similarly, although each star has different properties and characteristics, they are all necessary for the structure of the world.

Every Yid is like a star. We all have different abilities and personalities, leading to various missions and responsibilities expected of us. However, each one is essential to the success of the spiritual world. We must recognise our unique capabilities and use them to serve Hashem. These diverse missions do not create disunity; instead, they bring us together. Klal Yisroel can be compared to the spokes of a wheel; although the spokes point in different directions, they are all part of the same wheel and essential for its function. Likewise, while our roles may differ, we all contribute our talents and efforts to the collective mission of serving Hashem and glorifying His Name.

The Chasam Sofer writes in an interesting letter that he is accustomed to saying, “Any *halachah* written in Shulchan Aruch is Torah that applies universally, without exception. However, someone who only adheres to the Torah, even Torah he doesn’t have!” He explains that the reason for this is that someone who simply follows what he is dictated runs the risk of performing Torah and *mitzvos* out of habit. The Chasam Sofer therefore encourages, “Anyone who wishes to grow closer to Hashem should seek additional methods of serving Him that align with their personal qualities or characteristics. Regarding this, the approach that works for one person may not be effective for another, as each individual's heart has a different way of expressing love for Hashem. Nonetheless, these differences are merely external; at their core, all Yidden share the same goal: to deepen their connection to Hashem.”

We must learn from this the power of *achdus* and recognise how essential it is for the *geulah* we are eagerly awaiting. It is important to understand that the *Avodas Hashem* of each individual plays a crucial role in the larger picture. Although our paths may differ, our ultimate goal remains the same: to serve Hashem wholeheartedly. May we appreciate this lesson and work to improve our *achdus*, which will pave the way for the true *geulah*, *bimheirah veyameinu!*

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.