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# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## **Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...**

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### Unity of the Camp

[Be-Ahavah U-B-Emunah – Parashat Toldot 5769 – Translated by Rafael Blumberg]

Good news: if you investigate well, you'll discover that all the knitted-kippah wearers proclaim loudly, "We need unity in the camp." How fortunate that at least on this one point, everyone is united. And this one point really is important: unity in the camp. Following this great achievement, only one small point remains to be examined, and it is truly small. Actually, regarding such an important topic, it is petty to make a big deal out of such a marginal point. All the same, for the sake of the larger picture, we will mention it: what exactly is that camp in which we all have to unite? After all, we have before us many camps, with each one marching proudly and holding a large banner and a small trumpet and proclaiming loudly: "All the truth, justice and integrity is with me, and all the other camps are worthless". Moreover, the more time passes, the more our camp splits into sub-camps, until the innocent observer no longer knows which camp is his. Therefore, since everyone has his own camp, then I as well, like everyone else, shall suggest a camp: my camp is the entire Jewish people. I learned this from our master, Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, who apparently didn't like camps, as he wrote in his article, "Masa HaMachanot" [Ma'amarei HaReiyah, p. 76]. Yet he loved the Jewish people dearly.

Now don't claim that within the Jewish people there is this type of people and that type of people, each with their own shortcoming, for I will answer you, in accordance with what the Ba'al Shem Tov said: "Do not go around as a talebearer within our people" (Vayikra 19:16). Don't gossip about the Jewish people. I will also answer you quoting Rashi, who

relates in our Sages' name, what was the special strength of Gideon, to whom G-d said, "Go with the strength of yours" (Shoftim 6:14). Gideon's special strength was that he related positively to the Jewish people. I will further answer in the name of the Zohar, which writes several times regarding the verse, "I dwell among my people" (Melachim 1 2:4), that the main thing is to remain attached to the Jewish people. In the exile, we were scattered and divided amongst different communities. Then as well, this was a problem, but in our land, this cannot go on. Here we have an obligation to fulfill. "Who is like your people Israel, a unified nation in the land" (Shmuel 2 7:23). We must stop stabbing the Jewish people in the back, calling our fellow Jews "wicked" and casting aspersions on others (see Rambam's Igeret Kiddush Hashem). One of the disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov said, "Appoint for yourselves judges and policemen" (Devarim 16:18) – for yourselves, not for others.

Yes! Unity in the camp! Certainly! But who is the camp? The entire Jewish People. This involves a profound effort from within. As is known, divisiveness begins with faults, continues this speech and ends with deeds. Therefore, our mission at present is the following: unity within an enormous camp of the Jewish people, unity from all the heart. One might say: "These are fine words, but not realistic. They are a distant vision." Yet that is not the case. The vision is near to fulfillment. You just haven't noticed. With all your talk about divisiveness, you are blind, and you do not see just how much unity there is. I saw a living example of the enormous unity of all sectors of the nation. And where is this wonderful flower? The Army. Our army. The Israel Defense Force. There you find unity extending all the way to soldiers sacrificing their lives for each other. How fortunate we are to have merited us, and may we merit that this brotherhood should spread from the Army to all of our national lives. Consider what it says in "Pele Yoetz" on the entry "Hatzalah" [Deliverance]: "If someone saves people condemned to death, he brings his own soul merit as if he fulfilled the entire Torah, for our Sages said, 'If someone saves one Jew it is as though he saves an entire world' (Sanhedrin 37a). Of such people our Sages said, 'Even the empty ones of Israel are as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds' (Berachot 27a). There are many Jews who from without look like empty vessels, but they possess this mitzvah of saving Israel, and they thereby surpass the wise men and great luminaries of Israel." Do you understand? That same soldier who saves Jews thereby surpasses Israel's great luminaries. Obviously, this does not exempt him from all the rest of Torah and mitzvot. All the more so if he sacrifices his life in the process. He is then as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate.

I shall humbly add to what Pele Yo'etz said: "There is a soldier who throws a hand grenade against the enemy, he is as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate [rimon – Hebrew for both

pomegranate and hand grenade]. More than that, there is the soldier who falls on a hand grenade in order to save his fellow soldiers. He is certainly as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate...

And don't tell me that there are terror attacks despite the army's efforts, for if you say that you aren't speaking out of wisdom. Do you really think that the army operates with a 100% success rate? No. Only 99%. In 5768, only eighteen Jews died from terror in Israel (and by the way, not one of them died in Judea and Samaria), as compared to 500 dead from road accidents. There was likewise a 50% decrease in terrorists placing bombs. All of this doesn't happen out of nowhere, but thanks to the sophistication and devotion of the I.D.F. And perhaps you will also say, "Yet this is also an army that carries out evacuations?!" I thought this time you would spare us those fulminations! I thought you finally understood that life is complex. Remember that that same Jew who evacuated is the same Jew who fights against terrorists. He is your neighbor. He is your family. The rule is this. Among Jews, there can only be wars against ideas and not against people. One precious brigade commander who doesn't wear a kippa, nor carry it in his pocket, but whose only head covering is the sky, told me the following: "I am not worried about Iran or Iraq, about Hizbullah or Hamas. I am worried only by the fact that we do not speak with one voice regarding our Land, by the fact that there are those who do not enlist, whether from the Right or the Left, whether Charedi or national religious. Our weapon is spirit, and with this weapon we won all our wars." Thank G-d, we have a million soldiers who love their families and are loved by them, yet let us not fall asleep during our vigil.

The Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Mordechai Alter, author of the "Divrei Emet", related, "There was a wealthy Jew who supported his two sons-in-law. One ate only meat and the other ate only milk products. He set up a separate kitchen and dining room for each of them. In the end, he lost his riches, and could supply them with neither meat nor milk, but only meager bread and water. Yet they continued to eat separately. He asked them, "Why all this divisiveness?" "What is the parable here? At one time all the Jews truly served G-d, but they were divided by earthshaking principles. They therefore set up separate houses of study. Yet now, when crises abound everywhere, and the struggle over principles has been abandoned, such that there are no differences between different streams, why are there still divisions?" Therefore, let us go back to the way things were before, to the unity of the camp, the great camp of our entire people, our beloved people, our honored people, our brave and might people, our people who are so good, inside and out.