



## פרשת אחרי-קדושים

### Limbs of One Body.

18 Iyar, 5750-1990

Regardless of the circumstances — whatever the time, the place, or even one's level of serving God — "we all share one Father;" every Jew is "truly a part of God above." This supersedes all differences between us.

God wanted diversity in human nature: "no two opinions are alike," and "no two people are identical," to the extent that Torah enumerates ten general categories of Jews ranging from "your leaders" to "your water carriers."

Our essential bond, though, overshadows secondary differences.

A person's soul naturally takes precedence over his body; how much more so does a soul prevail over all sorts of differences, physical or spiritual, for each and every Jewish soul is "truly a part of God above."

This underscores the reality of Jewish unity in every place, every time and in every situation.

Nevertheless, the soul descends into a physical body, into the physical world — this lowest of all worlds — and is directed to reveal goodness and holiness, to manifest this fundamental unity.

But certain aspects of the soul and, even more so, elements of the body may conceal this unity. Moreover, since "no two opinions are alike," and "no two people are identical," this can lead to the opposite of unity, to outright discord.

Therefore the commandment to "love your fellow as yourself" is a "fundamental principle of Torah" — with the emphasis on "as yourself." The Talmud Yerushalmi asks: How can it be demanded (and a Jew will certainly fulfill this directive of Jewish unity); after all: he is "your fellow" and you are "yourself"?

The Yerushalmi explains that it is analogous to a body comprised of many limbs. The body was created with numerous limbs and sinews, yet they all belong to a single body. Their unity is not some additional feature, i.e., that they are distinct



## פרשת אחרי-קדושים

limbs, albeit related one with another. Rather, as evident from the example, the fact that the right hand and left hand are separate is immaterial when viewed alongside their coexistence as parts of the same body.

This unity transcends their otherness. It is visible and self-evident. Every limb — the right hand, left hand, and all the limbs — receives its life force through the blood; the blood, the “soul” within each limb, vitalizes them.

The same blood — as long as the body is healthy — courses throughout the body, maintaining its health. If one limb with its blood is detached, God forbid, from the other limbs and their blood, then the entire body is unhealthy. Good health is signified by full blood circulation throughout the body.

Therefore, the soul’s mission is not to be satisfied with the fact that Jews are in essence “a singular people” — regardless of their situation. We need to reveal this unity openly: it must permeate every aspect of the soul, every part of the body. And there, particularly in the body, it is more critical, for material differences can separate us more easily than spiritual differences. Unity in the physical realm is essential.

For this reason, as mentioned, “it is a fundamental principle of Torah to love your fellow as yourself” — specifically “as yourself.”

As the Oral Torah explains: we are all one body and the same “blood which is the soul” enlivens every part: this Jew, that Jew, a third Jew — every son and daughter of Israel.

And this should also permeate one’s thought, speech and action, as the Talmud continues: “The rest of it” — all of Torah and its mitzvos — are “commentary on this one principle,” revealing that “your fellow” is “like yourself.”

So declares the Torah of Truth, which is also the Torah of Life, a lesson in living.

