

## Superficial Unity

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The events occurring in the *parshios* that we're reading these weeks are, by their very nature, most seminal events. We are talking about the world and its beginning stage, and therefore every event that is described is really the seed for future events and thus gives us an understanding of the process of history which unfolds in the world.

While we have some understanding of the misdeeds of the *dor hamabul* and the consequences thereof, we are almost totally in the dark concerning the generation of *dor haplaggah*, the generation that was dispersed. What exactly their sin was is unclear, as is how exactly the punishment fit their misdeeds. And yet, this episode marks the beginning of the existence of different nations, cultures, and peoples in the world as we know it, and thus warrants understanding.

The Ran (*Derashos HaRan*, #1) explains at length what exactly the *dor haplaggah* did wrong and what the consequence was. Surprisingly, he says that they were not punished for any particular sin, rather Hashem acted to ward off possible damage that they may inflict on the world as a whole. These people were wicked and had managed to come together; their attempts at building an enterprise together seemed to be quite successful. Hashem understood that when people come together single-mindedly to accomplish something, they can accomplish almost anything. This is wonderful when righteous people come together but when the partners in the undertaking are wicked, unity turns their evil into something almost invincible. As such, the only way that the world can survive with so many wicked people around is to make sure that the evildoers can never come together and become truly united.

This is reminiscent of a *pshat* that the Sfas Emess says about the statement in the *Haggadah*, "that not only one nation tried to destroy us". The literal meaning of this is that many nations have, in fact, tried to destroy us. But the Sfas Emess says that this means that, "they never could unite in their attempt to overcome us", i.e. they could never become "one nation" in their attempts to destroy us.

Throughout our history, almost every time a group, nation, or even an alliance of nations, has tried to annihilate us, there always was a different group that took us in. As we were persecuted in one country, we found refuge in another one.

The Ran then explains that Hashem recognized how difficult it would be if all evildoers could unite, and therefore He made it part and parcel of evil and wickedness that they can never come together. It's not just that Hashem will proactively intervene and not allow it, rather it's that there fundamentally can be no unity when there is no goodness. Therefore, as these wicked people were coming together, engaged in a project that seemingly brought them all together, it exploded in every direction.

There is a logic behind this. When many people are seeking good then the good is "one" because Hashem, the source of all good, is one, and all the various people can therefore unite around it if they so choose. But evil and bad are personal; they are not shared ideals that everyone strives for, rather it is each person with his own cravings, desires, and ambitions that joins with the other to get what he needs and wants. This means that in essence they are never united, rather they are simply working together because it's beneficial for each one. That is not real unity;

it simply is a relationship that is pragmatic. Therefore, when slight dissension arises, each one spins off to their own world. And that is what happened with the *dor haplaggah*.

As I am writing this *dvar torah* we are just coming to grips with the terrible danger that *Klal Yisroel* is facing. An excruciatingly difficult battle seems to be looming in Gaza, Hezbollah is poised to enter the war, and Iran is making threatening noises.

There are two points that we need to bear in mind in this present situation. One is that as united as they are in their hatred of us, they would be more than eager to kill each other were it not for having a common enemy. This means that despite their purported unity, there is deep internal dissention. Somehow this will *iy"H* turn to a salvation for us, as the Sfas Emess says, "we are saved because they can never come as one to stand up against us."

But this also means that we need go in the opposite direction. We need to understand that as different and differing the tribes of *Klal Yisroel* are, and as much disagreement as there is, somewhere down deep we're all tied to Hashem *echad*. It is remarkable that at a time in which the fissures and breaks between different groups in *Klal Yisroel* were so pronounced and publicly displayed, all division almost disappeared overnight with the advent of this terrible danger that we're facing. We believe wholeheartedly that the dangers we're facing did not merely bring about a marriage of convenience between groups within *Klal Yisroel* that are fundamentally incompatible. Rather we believe that we are one in essence, and the fissures, dissension, and arguments were the temporary phenomena. The world survives because the wicked can never become one united front against good, and because all of those different groups that represent *tov* at their core can overcome surface cracks and fissures and come together as the 'one' that they really are.