Rabbi David Hanania Pinto
E-mail : kolhaim@hpinto.org.il

ע"ה דוד חנניה פינטו

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Unity

The Ben Ish Chai zya"a (beg. Parshat Va'eira) writes on the verse *"I shall make a distinction between My people and your people, tomorrow this sign will come about"*: "I would like to suggest, with siyata dishmaya, that the word 'מחר', tomorrow, is made up of the same letters as 248 ,'רמ"ח', and 'רחם', compassion. The implication is that each one of Am Yisrael must fulfill all 248 positive commandments, but this is impossible [since some mitzvot can only be performed by Kohanim, while there are mitzvot that Kohanim may not perform, for example marrying one's ex-wife]. But through the love that exists among Yisrael, each one can achieve 248 mitzvot through being combined with his friend's deeds. That is why 248 ,'רמ"ח', has the same letters as 'compassion' because compassion is an expressive interpretation of love and hints to the fact that the 248 positive mitzvot can be completed by each individual through the compassion, the love, that exists among them."

The desire to draw closer to Hashem necessitates unity, for this is the will of our Creator who gave us all of the 613 mitzvot that cannot be fulfilled unless there is complete unity.

There is a wonderful allusion which complements the words of the Ben Ish Chai. A close look at the verse *"For the hand is on the throne (כס) of G-d (י-ה)"* (Shemot 17:16) reveals that to make up the word 'כסא', throne, the letter 'alef' is missing, while the word 'י-ה', G-d, is missing the letters 'yud' and 'heh' to form G-d's complete Name (י-ה-ו-ה). Combining the missing 'alef' from 'כס' to the missing letters 'vav' and 'heh', gives a numerical value of twelve, (1+6+5) which alludes to the fact that when there is no unity among the twelve tribes, the name of G-d and His throne are flawed and lacking. Only with the power of unity can we fulfil the verse (Zechariah 14:9), *"Hashem will be the King over all the land; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One".*

I was once walking in the street in Lyon when someone threw something at me. I looked around to see where that object had fallen from and noticed someone who I recognized. His face was a picture of hatred and jealousy and when he saw me looking at him I was treated to a number of suitable curses.

I did not let the matter disturb my peace of mind and continued on my way, contemplating what had caused this individual to throw something at me and hate me so strongly. I never insulted him or caused him any harm. I concluded that he hated me not because of anything bad that I had done to him but on the contrary, he was jealous of me because of my good deeds. If this was the case, I considered him an unfortunate individual. Instead of trying to learn from my ways and rectify his traits, he tried to humiliate me and in this way quieten his conscience. This brought me to feel compassion for him and I began to judge him favorably, thinking that maybe his personal situation caused him to deteriorate to a difficult mental state. I continued justifying his ways until I felt absolutely no negative feelings towards him. I actually felt wholehearted love for him, despite his actions.

A month later, some workers came to my home to carry out several repairs. Suddenly I noticed that one of the workers was that man who had mocked me when I walked in the street. I chose not to bring up the subject at all and treated him with respect and politeness. Before they left my home, that worker approached me to ask my forgiveness for treating me with disrespect, but I made out as if I didn't remember the incident so as not to embarrass him. I just told him that if he repented, Hashem certainly accepted his repentance and will send him blessings and success in all his endeavors.

I felt how my initial hatred was transformed into a great love. He kissed my hand and left with an apologetic smile on his face. I felt that I had added another layer to the unity of Am Yisrael.

David Chananya Pinto