

1. Rabbi David ben Shlomo ibn Abi Zimra (16<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Responsa of Radvaz 3:472  
Regarding His Honour Rabbi Yehudah and his colleagues, who were with this community like any other community, for all of their matters – tzedakah collections, taxes, everything. After a great period of time, they claimed that they were Kaposian (Copts?), and they did not wish to continue to function with the community as they had before, for whatever reason. They refused to donate to the collection and other needs with the community. And when the Tunisians and other individuals from the community saw that this could cause strife, they wrote a deed [of absolution of responsibility?] for them as they wished, and when they showed it to the other community leaders for their signature, they did not wish to sign. Just the opposite, they protested this, rejected it, and tore the document from their hands. Then the Tunisians and those other individuals wrote a document like the first, signed it, and gave it to them, against the will of the others. And then their intentions became clear – the Tunisians, and Rabbi Yehudah and his colleagues, went and formed their own community. When they saw this, the leaders protested against those individuals who had participated in this against their wishes. They replied that they had done this only to eliminate strife; had they known this was their intent, they would not have done it at all...

#### Why is peace among Jews critical?

2. Deuteronomy 33:5

And He was king in Yeshurun, when the heads of the nation gathered, the tribes of Israel together.

3. Midrash, Sifri, Devarim 346

When they are as one group, and not when they are many groups.

4. Deuteronomy 29:28

That which is hidden is for HaShem our Gd. And that which is revealed is for us and our children forever, to fulfill all of the words of this Torah.

5. Talmud, Sanhedrin 43b

Gd did not punish [collectively] for hidden sin until the Jews crossed the Yarden, according to Rabbi Yehudah.

Rabbi Nechemiah argued... Just as Gd did not punish for hidden sin, so He did not punish [collectively] for public guilt until the Jews crossed the Jordan.

6. Talmud, Menachot 27a

Of the four species with the *lulav*, two produce edible fruit and two do not produce edible fruit. The ones that produce edible fruit need the ones that do not produce, and the ones that do not produce edible fruit need the ones that produce edible fruit, and one cannot fulfill his obligation until they are all in one bundle. Israel, too, is not accepted [by Gd] until they are in one bundle.

#### Three applications

7. Deuteronomy 14:1

You are children of HaShem, your Gd; you shall not cut yourselves, and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for the dead.

8. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16<sup>th</sup> century Poland), Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 493:3

In a single town, they should not have some people practice one custom and some people practice another custom, because of the issue of "You shall not cut yourselves".

9. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:11

'One who leaves the path of the community' – Even if he does not violate any sin, but he is only separate from the community of Israel and he does not perform mitzvot among them and he does not enter in their trouble and he does not fast for their fasts, but he goes his own way like one of the nations, as though he is not from them. Such a person has no share in the next world.

10. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes (19<sup>th</sup> century Galicia), Niddah 34a

The division caused is great when a person abstains from eating with another Jew, and the moment is especially bad when he is not credible regarding tithes and purity. It was not for naught that Rabbi Akiva said, when he was an *am ha'aretz*, "Who would give me a Torah scholar, and I would bite him like a donkey!"

The essential reason for holiday pilgrimages was to join the hearts of Israel, but that goal would not be achieved if they would not be mutually credible regarding purity.

The sages insightfully eliminated the obstacle, lest the Satan come to dance among them on these sacred days, causing enmity and division of hearts. They made all Israel as *chaverim* in the time of the festival, and even *amei ha'aretz* are credible at that time for their wine and their oil. Because of this, *chaver* and *am ha'aretz* could eat bread together and join together in a meal of friends, and so increase love and join hearts to each other.

#### But not at any price

11. Leviticus 19:17

Do not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely instruct your friend, and do not bear sin for him.

12. Talmud, Shabbat 55a

Gd never expressed a good verdict and then retracted it to cause harm, other than in this case: "Gd said to him, pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and draw a 'Tav' on the foreheads of the people...for all of the abominable acts performed there." (Ezekiel 9:4)

Gd said to Gabriel: Go inscribe a 'Tav' in ink on the heads of the righteous, so that the angels of destruction will not have any effect on them. Inscribe a 'Tav' in blood on the heads of the wicked, so that the angels of destruction will have an effect on them.

The trait of Justice said before Gd: Master of the Universe, what is the difference between these and those?

Gd responded: These are completely righteous, those are completely wicked!

It said: Master of the Universe, they ought to have protested, and they did not do so!

Gd responded: I know clearly that had they protested, the people would not have accepted it from them.

It said: Master of the Universe, if to You it is clear, to them is it clear?

13. Mishnah, Avot 1:7

And do not join with a wicked person

#### Back to our initial question

14. Rabbi David ben Shlomo ibn Abi Zimra (16<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Responsa of Radvaz 3:472

One may not pray in a place which will distract him, or at a time when he will be distracted. Therefore, an individual or group who experience open or concealed enmity, or anger, or a quarrel with the community will not be able to pray in an acceptable way, and they are not permitted to pray there, for their thoughts are distracted and they cannot focus in their prayers. This is certainly true if people overtly antagonize him, constantly. This is all the more true if the anger is with the leaders of the community.

Were I not afraid to say it, I would say that it would be better to pray privately than to pray with a group of people with whom his mind is not at peace.

There is also another reason: One should not pray other than in a place his heart desires, just as we say that one can learn Torah only where his heart desires. When a person looks at someone with whom he is at peace, his spirit is aroused into complete focus and his mind broadens and his heart is joyous and the spirit of Gd then rests upon him, as we state regarding prophecy.

15. Rabbi Moshe Sofer (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary), Responsa of Chatam Sofer 5:Choshen Mishpat 12:3

Woe is us, that in our day such has happened! Gathering is good for the righteous, and good for the world! But what can we do, when our sins have created a situation in which we cannot gather them, and so they must separate.