

Parshat Re'eh
Rabbi Eryn London
Class of 2017

In this week's Parsha, Parshat Re'eh, we read "You are the children to Hashem, your God- you shall not cut yourselves (*lo titgodedu*), and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for the dead person" (Deuteronomy 14:1). In tractate Yevamot (13b), the sage *Reish Lakish* teaches that from these words, *lo titgodedu* "you shall not cut yourself", we learn that one should not create separate groups within the community. In *Perkei Avot* (2:5), Ethics of Our Fathers, *Hillel* teaches a similar message, that one should not separate one's self from the community.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook wrote:

The relationship between the Jewish people and its individual members is different than the relationship between any other national group and its constituents. All other national groups only bestow upon their individual members the external aspect of their essence. But the essence itself each person draws from the all-inclusive soul, from the soul of God, without the intermediation of the group... This is not the case regarding Israel. The soul of the individuals is drawn from ... the community, the community bestowing a soul upon the individual's. One who considers severing himself from the people must sever his soul from the source of its vitality. Therefore each individual Jew is greatly in need of the community. He will always offer his life so that he should not be torn from the people, because his soul and self-perfection require that of him (*Orot*, pg. 144).

It is the individuals that build the community, but it is also the community that brings life to the individual. So many people spoke on Tuesday night about the beauty and light that the community has given to them and to their families. As someone who is new to the community, I must mention how much I notice the amount of time, effort and love that I have seen individuals give to the community.

It is easy to separate oneself from the community. Creating and sustaining a community is very hard, and it can easily cause rifts and cause people to give up on working with and for the community. All too often we hear about issues that occur in communities that cause long standing friends to stop speaking to one another. But here, I was able to witness a community working hard together. Working together to build a home that is able to house both an Orthodox congregation and a Liberal congregation, which is very rare to see. Working together to create an atmosphere that attracts people of all backgrounds and ages to learn and engage in Torah. Working together to truly create a holy space that is filled with people, prayer, learning, and life.



Rabbi Eryn London, is a chaplain resident at New York Presbyterian - Weill Cornell Medical Center. She earned her B.A from Goucher College, where she majored in theatre, minoring in psychology and Judaic studies. Eryn subsequently earned an M.A. at Goldsmiths, University of London. She specialized in applied drama: theatre in educational, community, and social contexts. Eryn made aliyah in February of 2010 and studied at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and at the Susi Bradfield Women's Institute of Halachic Leadership at Midreshet Lindenbaum. She is one of the co-founders of "Gam Yachad", a multi-denominational Beit Midrash for Israeli rabbinical students. Eryn has served as scholar in residence and rabbinic intern at the ACT Jewish Community in Canberra, Australia, Adath Shalom B'nai Israel in Chicago, Illinois, and at the Mt. Freedom Jewish Center in Randolph, New Jersey. In addition, Eryn has lectured in various communities in Israel, Canada, Colombia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.