

FROM THE RABBI

JEWISH COMMUNITY—WHAT IS IT?



Jewish Community, according to its Talmudic usage, has a somewhat strange nomenclature. It is called *K'lal Yisrael*. *K'lal* is from the Hebrew word *Kawl* which means “all” or “whole”. When that phrase, “the whole of Israel” is used, it is an all inclusive word.

These two words, when used together, *are* all inclusive. It makes no exclusions. It erases the lines, parochial separations, geographic divisions, political philosophies and religious (or secular) expressions. There are no adjectives to separate Jews from Jews.

The secret to Jewish survival and existence is the refusal to deny another Jew of his/her Jewishness.

When the famous Beiliss Blood Libel fiasco occurred in Czarist Russia at the first of the Twentieth Century, Mendel Beiliss, a young Jewish worker was wrongly and falsely accused of murdering a Russian Christian child to extract his blood for use in Passover matza. (A calumny and brutal lie was often utilized by anti-Semites throughout our history accusing the Jews of using Christian children’s blood in the traditional unleavened bread).

During the long, arduous and drawn out trial, the main defense attorney was frightened that the prosecution would use the Talmudic sections that dealt with the *higher* spiritual essence of the Jewish people. The prosecution would say that Jews felt themselves superior to others and therefore could kill any *lowly* gentile at their whim, especially to fulfill a Jewish law.

Beiliss’s idealistic attorney, upon visiting heads of the Jewish community, was given a suggestion. “Go and visit the Chortkover Rebbe and ask him what to do.”

Soon after, he made an appointment with the Rebbe and asked him what he should say. This is what the great Chortkover Rebbe said, “Tell the court to consider what would happen if an Italian man were arrested and put on trial, or a German or a Frenchman. Would all his countrymen pray for his safety or would they all go about their business?” At Beiliss’s trial, Jews the world over protested and did all they could to stop this travesty.

The Jewish people are unique in this regard. One Jew is arrested and put on trial and Jews worldwide are concerned for his safety, as newspapers throughout the world reported regarding the Beiliss case.

That is the difference between the Jewish people and other peoples. We see it in Israel. We saw it at the 1972 Olympics and Entebbe. We’ve witnessed it and continue to see it constantly.

That is what *Kol Yisrael Araivim Zeh BaZeh* means. Differences are put aside and we are One.

That, dear friends, is what Jewish Community is. That is *K'lal Yisrael*.

Rabbi Edward H. Garsek