

And I will take you to Myself as a people. (6:7)

The destiny and concomitant exclusivity of *Klal Yisrael* are described in these few words. Hashem took us to Him as a nation via the medium of the Torah, which we accepted. *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, observes that people have thoughtlessly grouped the Jewish religion together with the religions of the other nations of the world, when, in fact, our religion encompasses many elements beyond those commonly regarded to be integral to religion. The above verse – *Li l'am*, “To Myself as a People,” clearly delineates that Judaism as established by Hashem is, indeed, not a religion at all; rather, religion is the fundamental means for becoming a part of the nation of *Yisrael*. Judaism also embraces elements, which are generally characterized as integral to religion, but the concept of Judaism is completely different and infinitely broader than the term religion as it applies to other religions.

As the term religion is understood, G-d is found in/through temples, churches, congregations, priests, etc. Nations, however, are subject only to kings, presidents, governments, etc. A nation is focused on the concept of statehood, not religion and not G-d. This is where we differ. In Judaism, G-d has established much more than a synagogue, but a nation – a nation is based upon Him in every aspect of life. *Klal Yisrael* is a nation driven by religion. It is not a religious sect whose people happen to be Jewish and are called *Yisrael*. *Klal Yisrael* is the nation, and the nation lives and is guided by its adherence to religion.

Judaism's core values and ethos are different from those of other religions. Our teachings are meant solely for us – exclusively. Our religion is based upon a *bris*, covenant, between Hashem and our nation. A covenant is a reciprocal relationship in which each party commits to the covenant. If one breaks his commitment, he severs his bond, thereby abrogating his status in the nation. When nationhood is founded upon commitment to the Torah, rejecting the Torah expunges one's relationship with the nation. He remains a Jew, because he has a biological connection with Judaism. Nationhood/*Am Yisrael* is different. It is based upon commitment to the covenant.