

English Translation of YN article

After condemning the ultra-Orthodox takeover of the egalitarian prayer plaza at the Western Wall on the night of Tisha B'Av, Rabbi Eliezer Melamed continues his work of reconciling with the Liberal movements: Ynet has learned that Rabbi Melamed, the rabbi of Har Bracha and Rosh Yeshiva there, hosted at his home in the Shomron the Conservative movement's executive director, Rakefet Ginsberg, for a rare summit meeting between a senior Orthodox rabbi and a Conservative leader.

Rabbi Melamed, one of the most prominent poskim in religious Zionism, has in recent years led a courageous line opposing the boycott taken by rabbis in his camp against the liberal movements and their representatives, and he is severely criticized by the conservative wing of the religious community for it. The clashes in the Western Wall plaza last month, in an attempt to exclude Reform and Conservative worshippers from it on the very day the people of Israel mourn the Temple that was destroyed because of baseless hatred, shocked Melamed even more, and he condemned the ultra-Orthodox activists and organizations responsible.

Now, as mentioned, the rabbi met with CEO Ginsberg, who asked to support him and thank him or supporting her people. Rabbi Melamed and his wife, Rabbanit Inbal Ercho, hosted her in their home last Tuesday, a step which will give more fuel to the attacks against him from the traditional wing of his camp, given the embrace that he has granted to the Liberal movements and the tolerance he shows towards them.

Ginsberg told Ynet that she feels that "we are on the verge of chaos" to the point of "existential danger" in the wake of recent events, and therefore the meeting is not for political purposes, debating who is right or "making headlines" - but "born out of responsibility and understanding that we are in a time after a break, and we must take responsibility for the unity of Israel and the love of Israel. "

"My dialogue with the rabbi and the rabbanit was between three people who worry about our shared future and are committed to reducing hostility between segments of our people," the Conservative movement's director general added. "We were not talking about Judaism, but about human beings. The feeling was that we were learning to recognize and listen, and that things were coming from the heart. They hosted me at their house in a way that really moved me. "

The Conservative leader has recently followed the softening of Rabbi Melamed's attitude toward the liberal movements and the criticism he has received about it in the rabbinical world and has seen the need to side with him. "I came just to thank him for the public courage and support him," she said. "I know there are others who think like him and are afraid to talk - and we need to strengthen them."

"We did not come to convince each other," Ginsberg stressed. "He will continue to be Orthodox in his faith and worldview and I respect him. It is irrelevant at the moment. We just came to say that it is important to meet and talk and find a way to maintain Jewish unity, the most important value right now - and that is the role of both sides. Unfortunately, that unity is not self-evident.

"We had a lot of disagreements in the conversation, but it did not change for a moment the feeling that we are brothers and that the responsibility for the shared is greater than the struggle," the CEO concluded. "That is the meaningful thing, in my opinion, and it was a moving experience there among the three of us.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, for his part, devoted his halakhic column last weekend in the religious newspaper B'Sheva to seeing the best in Reform and Conservative Jews, protecting them from the boycotters and giving legitimacy to dialogue and cooperation with them.

He wrote that "the Reformers, and more so the Conservatives, want to preserve their Jewish identity," and even if they are sinners, "the sins of the various movements stem from the search for truth and morality, and have a side of righteousness." Accordingly, the rabbi stated that "one should conduct the argument with them with respect, and learn from the good in them."

"The talk of boycotting the movement and its leaders is effectively uprooting the commandment to love Israel, which is a great principle in the Torah, and strikes like a sword in the heart of the nation," the rabbi added. "The disagreements should be conducted according to derech eretz, and not in the style of boycotts, war and violence, both from the side of right and moral - and on the part of being more beneficial from a public and educational point of view."

And: "There are Reform Jews who support the haters of the State of Israel, and precisely because of this I appreciate and love all the more so those who immigrated to Israel and those who remember [the importance of] the Western Wall. In any case, even those who are very far from us still seek unity with us, and it is a mitzvah to extend back the hand they extended to us. We are all brothers, all sons of God."

On the claim that members of the movement "encourage assimilation," Rabbi Melamed wrote: "The tendency of the Reformers is to preserve Jewish identity. Therefore, at first, they opposed marriage with Gentiles. When they saw that they weren't able to stop the assimilationist drift, and there happened to be a Jew who wanted to marry a Gentile if that person did it they had two options: to remove them from the community or to recognize the intermarriage. They chose to contain intermarriage and attach them to the community. Of course, intermarriage is not allowed, and those who have not been properly converted are not Jews. However, it's not right to claim that they encourage assimilation."