

וישלה

SHIMON, LEVI AND YEHUDAH

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Ha'azinu* 949) teaches that there is a direct link between the blessings Yaakov gave to his sons at the end of his life, and the blessings that Moshe *Rabbeinu* gave to the *shevatim* at the end of his life (in *parshas Zos Habrachah*).

ממקום שסיים יעקב אבינו לברך את בניו, משם התחיל משה (ילקש האזינו תתקמט)

Nowhere is this connection more apparent than in the case of Shimon. He was categorized, with Levi, as:

כלי חמס מכרתיהם

. . . brothers who ply their weapons of violence, their swords (*Bereishis* 49:5).

They were criticized for their violent handling of Sh'chem and for their violence against their brother Yosef. Yaakov apparently cursed their anger and their wrath (*Bereishis* 49:7):

ארור אפס כי עז ועברתם כי קשתה

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.

During the generation of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, *Sheivet* Shimon demonstrated that it had learned nothing from Yaakov's admonition. It was *Sheivet* Shimon with their *Nasi*, Zimri, who were the ringleaders in the scandal involving the Medianite women (*Bamidbar* 25:14). Levi, on the other hand, was the only *Sheivet* to respond to Moshe's call:

מי לה' אלי

Whoever is for Hashem, join me (*Shemos* 32:26),

and they proceeded to punish the transgressors in the sin of the *eigel*. Levi was the only *sheivet* that remained pure from sin in the above incident. His was also the only *sheivet* that was not involved in idol worship in Egypt (*Yoma* 66:), and the only *sheivet* that did not discontinue the practice of *bris milah* in the desert. They understood Yaakov's message and forcefully molded their intellect and heart to conform to the standards set by their great father.

When Moshe continued with Yaakov's blessings, it is not surprising that he spoke favorably of Levi (see Ramban *Devarim* 33:6) — but totally disregarded Shimon. The name of Shimon is omitted both in reference to blessing and to inheritance. (See *Targum Yonasan*, *Bereishis* 49:7). This is a chilling fact to consider, in light of the *Gemara*

גמירי דלא כלה שבטא מישראל

We learned that no *sheivet* shall cease from Israel (*Bava Basra* 115:).

It is therefore of great significance that *Targum Yonasan* reveals:

...included in the blessing of Yehudah was a partnership with Shimon regarding inheritance and blessing (*Devarim 33:7*).

Moshe *Rabbeinu* gave us a *remez* — hint — regarding Shimon, but did not actually mention him at all. When Yehoshua distributed the territories of *Eretz Yisrael*, Shimon did not get its own independent portion, but instead received several cities within the portion of Yehudah:

...and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Yehudah . . . out of the portion of the children of Yehudah was the inheritance of the children of Shimon (*Yehoshua 19:1,9*).

There seems to be contained within the blessing of Moshe, a natural alliance between Shimon and Yehudah; what bearing does that have on their past and on their future? There is also a definite relationship between Shimon and Levi, in Yaakov's blessing; how is that to be understood?

The common bond between Shimon and Levi was that both possessed potential holiness from the womb. The Torah informs us:

Hashem saw that Leah was despised, so he opened her womb (*Bereishis 29:31*).

This *pasuk* is quite puzzling. The Torah always takes special caution in its language not to speak of the shame of even an impure animal; how is it conceivable that the Torah would describe the shame of the “righteous ones”?

What must be understood is that the word “despised” is not referring to the relationship between Yaakov and Leah; it is referring to the attitude that Leah displayed toward the wicked Eisav (*Bava Basra 123*•). The Torah tells us that Leah hated the evil work of Eisav (*Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeitzei 4; Maharsha, Nedarim 20*:). Similarly, when the Torah announces:

Leah was tender eyed (*Bereishis 29:17*),

the Torah is not intimating an inferior physical appearance. It is actually revealing that Leah's eyes turned tender because of the many tears she shed in prayer, beseeching Hashem to reverse her destiny to marry Eisav, and instead become the wife of Yaakov (*ibid.*). Leah was able to use this same power of prayer to prevail upon Hashem to make her the dominant matriarchal figure of *Klal Yisrael*.

Leah discloses that her special power of “hatred of evil” was transmitted to Shimon at birth:

“Because Hashem heard that I am despised, He therefore gave me this one also”; and she called his name Shimon (*Bereishis 29:33*).

From conception, Shimon was naturally infused with the power of “hatred of evil,” a special holiness which was a gift from the womb.

Levi was also designated with special holiness while in his mother's womb. Rashi (*Bereishis* 29:34) avows that Hashem personally named Levi, and sent the angel Gavriel to him before birth, bearing the twenty-four gifts of the Priesthood.

It is now clear why it was Shimon and Levi who took particular offense at the defilement of their sister, Dinah. These two brothers were designated as the “Guardians of the holiness of *Klal Yisrael*.” It should come as no surprise that in the incident concerning *Dinah*, these two brothers had the final word in the dialogue with their father Yaakov; after which there was no room for further discussion:

הַכֹּזֵנָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת אֲחֹתִי

As with a harlot should one deal with our sister? (*Bereishis* 34:31).

It was their duty to guard the holiness and sanctity of *Klal Yisrael*, and Yaakov understood this. It behooved them to attend to the violation committed by Shechem.

Their violent approach to their brother Yosef now becomes clear. In their zeal to inculcate only holiness in the Jewish people, they were determined to eradicate anything that resembled the evil of Eisav, and they saw in Yosef many of Eisav's characteristics. Yosef, in their judgment, frequently engaged in *lashon hara* — evil reports — he was very much concerned with materialism: in grooming his eyes and arranging his hair, and he was concerned about appearing handsome (Rashi, *Bereishis* 37:2). The seed of the congregation of Hashem could not tolerate such apparent evil; hence, as the “Guardians of Holiness,” it was their duty to remove Yosef from the scene.

We can now analyze the special alliance between Shimon and Yehudah. Shimon represented and embodied the hidden prayer within his mother's heart — the prayer that only Hashem could hear. This prayer could not find expression in *Olom Hazeh* because it was too profound for words. That is why the Torah disguised it in the form of “*senu'ah*” — “despised” — “Because Hashem has heard” (כִּי שָׁמַע ה'); only Hashem can grasp the depths of Leah's prayer (which was Shimon's birthright), and it will ultimately only become comprehensible to humans in the Next World. Yehudah, on the other hand, represented the articulation and the vocalization of human prayer:

הַפֶּעַם אֹדֶה אֶת ה'

This time I will praise Hashem (*Bereishis* 29:35).

In his role as *Melech* — King — and spokesman for *Klal Yisrael*, Yehudah embodies both *Olom Hazeh*, and ultimately *Olom Habah* (in the form of *Melech Mashiach*). Yehudah's “prayer” is intelligible to the human ear, while Shimon's “prayer” will only be intelligible in the World to Come. In his blessings, Moshe hinted to us that there was no room for the holiness typified by Shimon in this world; it could only be revealed in the next world. Hence, Shimon of *Olom Habah* had to be intertwined with Yehudah, who exemplified what is intelligible to *Olam Hazeh*. The silent *tefilah* was hidden within the expressible *tefilah* (Maharal *Gur Aryeh, Devarim* 33:7).

This is similar to the idea expressed in *Pesachim* (50•): the Divine name is concealed in this world and may not be articulated; it should not be read as it is written but it should be read in a disguised form. In the next world, it will be vocalized in its proper written form.

Levi, who also possessed special holiness from the womb, was granted expression in *Olom Haze*h in the blessing of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Levi had taken his father's teachings,

ארור אפס כי עז

Cursed be their anger (*Bereishis* 48:7)

to heart, and had shaped his holiness for appropriate expression in this world to such an extent that the Rambam (*Hilchos Shemitah Veyoveil* 13:12) explains that Levi was "separated to serve Hashem," (שהובדל לעבוד את ה'). Levi was scattered in cities throughout *Eretz Yisrael*, perhaps in an attempt to have the Guardians of Holiness protectively dispersed throughout the land. Shimon, who was not capable of incorporating his father's teaching to direct his birthright of holiness to this world, was forced to temporarily remain without a defined inheritance. Yechezkel *Hanavi* (48:24) does indeed state that in the Messianic era, when *Eretz Yisrael* will again be redivided among the *Shevatim*, *Sheivet* Shimon will clearly receive his own portion of *Eretz Yisrael*.

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