PARSHA WITH
Rabbi Shmuel Brazil
זיו התורה Zeev HaTorah
בס"ד
WWW.ZEEVHATORAH.ORG
FOR SONSORSHIP AND TO SUBSCRIBE PLEASE EMAIL ZEEVMAINOFFICE@GMAIL.COM

RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS VAYEITZEI תשפז

LEVI THE SHEVATIM UNIFIER

When the third child of Leah was born he was called Levi for she said now my husband will be attached to me for I have borne him three sons which is 1/4 of the twelve tribes. I have fulfilled my quota of the prophecy in which we saw the birth of twelve Tribes (four wives therefore three each). The question is that if she fulfilled her quota by giving birth to Levi why did she think that Yaakov would take a special attachment to her when the other wives will also fulfill their quota with three children each?

What also is unique about Levi from all the other **Shevatim** in that it was Hashem who called him Levi as Rashi points out. The only other exception found in the naming of the *Shevatim* was *Binyamin* who Yaakov named him by changing the name that Rachel gave to him.

We must also understand why was Levi sometimes counted as part of the Twelve *Shevatim* and sometimes not. When the sons of Yosef, Efrayim and Menashe are included in the Twelve, then Levi is omitted. However, when Yosef alone is counted then Levi as well is counted. Is Levi in or out?

Our first encounter with the concept of Twelve Tribes is revealed in our *parsha* when Yaakov leaves *Eretz Yisrael* and he camps by the future place of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The Torah relates that he took twelve stones from the altar upon which Yitzchak was bound as a korban, and placed them around his head and he slept there for the night (Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer). A clearer description is in the Medrash

ב"ר סח יא רבי יהודה אמר שתים עשרה אבנים נטל והיה מהרהר בלבו כך גזר הקב"ה שהוא מעמיד שנים עשר שבטים אמר: אברהם לא העמידן יצחק לא העמידן אם מתאחדות הן שתים עשרה אבנים זו לזו יודע אני שאני מעמיד י"ב שבטים **כיון שנתאחדו** י"ב האבנים זו לזו ידע שהוא מעמיד י"ב שבטים.

Yaakov knew that the destiny of *Am Yisrael* is to have twelve *Shevatim*. He therefore took twelve stones and made a condition that if these separate stones will unify to become one then I will accept that it was meant to be that the 12 Tribes will descend from me. In the morning when he saw one stone he knew they were destined to come from him.

Why was it necessary for the Twelve to become one? Furthermore *Chazal* say that each stone argued that Yaakov should place his head on it. If so why would there be a necessity to have Twelve *Shevatim* just have one which will create the greatest unity?

To answer these questions one has to first understand the function of the Twelve Tribes in *Am Yisrael*. The Ari writes that there are 12 windows in the heaven through which all the tefillos enter each *Shevet's* route according to its *nusach* and *kavanos*. The Chasam Sofer writes that the same parallel exists with the different styles and approaches to learning of the Torah that each *Shevet* possesses its own *derech* and window through which it enters ותן חלקינו בתורתך.

Twelve *Shevatim* in *Yisrael* is not about twelve offspring or separate dynasties to be formed. Rather it expresses twelve different types of avodah how to serve Hashem, learn the Torah and fulfill His *mitzvos* all of which are necessary. *Klal Yisrael* is one unit void of any *machlokes*. For one to claim עלי יניח צדיק על ראשו that only my *derech* is legitimate, and Hashem does not want yours, is a lie. Take the word שבט which means a tribe which contains thousands of people as counted in the Chumash.



Yet the *gematria* of **שבט** is the same as **איש** one single person. This was Yaakov's condition that if the 12 stones unify overnight that will be a sign from *shamayim* that I will merit to have 12 *Shevatim*. If their unification fails to happen, then this is not the Klal Yisrael that I am interested in to father and develop to its fruition. **גוי אחד בארץ** אתה אחד ושמך אחד ומי כעמך ישראל.

Now we can understand the role of *Shevet Levi*. It was Levi who was designated to preserve the *achdus* and acceptance between all the *Shevatim*, their *tefillos*, *avodah*, *mesorah*, traditions and uniqueness of their learning. This *Shevet Levi* was not elected by the people but rather given its name by Hashem for the mission of keeping all Yisrael in a state of shalom attached to each other and to Hashem. The *Mishna* in *Middos* says that there were 15 steps that led from the *Ezras Nashim* to the *Ezras Yisrael* upon which the *Leviim* would sing on *Succos* the fifteen *Shir Hamaalos* in *Tehillim*. The Keli Yakar (Berieshis 22,2) explains why were there exactly 15 steps connecting the male and female courts. The *gemarah* in Sotah 17 says that when there is harmony between husband and wife, Hashem dwells amongst them. If this is lacking the marriage is consumed by fire. Rashi explains that איש אשה both contain the letters of אש fire, but in contrast the man has a letter *yud* and the woman the letter ה which is Hashem's name **יה**. When there is peace then the letters of Hashem and His *Shechinah* dwell in their household. Otherwise these letters leave and the only letters remaining in both are אש.

At *Matan Torah* and in the *Beis Hamikdash* there were manifestations of the relationship between Hashem and *Yisrael* that parallel to the marriage of husband and wife. The task of the *Leviim* was to sing the 15 *Shir Hamalos* on these 15 steps in order to repair the attachment of *Yisrael* to Hashem in case there were any distancing between them. *Succos* time especially during *Simchas Beis Hashoaivah* when the **Shechina** dwelled by everyone, the *Leviim* made our attachment with Hashem even deeper and more intimate.

Chazal interpret the *passuk* ויקח איש מבית לו את בת לוי that because of the Egyptian decree of killing the Jewish male babies, Amram who was a Levite, divorced his wife Yocheved in order to avoid having any more children lest they be killed. All Yisrael followed suit and they too divorced their wives. His daughter Miriam persuaded her father that this was not the proper action to take. He accepted her opinion and remarried Yocheved. Again all Yisrael remarried their wives. To admit his national wrong decision after everyone followed it and again reversed it, took more than tremendous courage and virtue. Amram's amazing dedication not to flinch an iota from the *emes* merited for him to give birth to *Moshe Rabbeinu* who delivered to us the Torah of *Emes* from *shamayim*.

The **meforshim** ask why is the Torah so secretive about this episode in that it conceals the identity of the names of the איש ואשה who made such a revolution in *Am Yisrael*, only to reveal that they were *Leviim*? It could very well be because here the Torah is stressing that this is where *Shevet Levi's* first undertaking of the role to make peace and reattach millions of separated husbands and wives back together and likewise to attach *Am Yisrael* to Hashem.

It was *Shevet* Levi who was the only *Shevet* that did not worship the *Aigel* which broke our marriage and the *Luchos* gifted to us by Hashem. That is why they were chosen to serve Hashem and that



Moshe from *Shevet Levi* reattached our union with Hashem by pleading for our continued existence and our remarriage on Yom Kippur by receiving the *Second Luchos*.

Levi was not just another *Shevet* but also the unifier between all the *Shevatim* and their unique qualities, talents and Heavenly Windows. With this we can understand that upon birth of Levi, Leah felt more than accomplished. She gave birth to Levi who was to bind all the *Shevatim* with their differences types of *avodah* into a comfortable acceptance of "*different* strokes for different folks" with the *emunah* of בשבילי נברא העולם.

Returning back to the miraculous episode of Yaakov with stones we can pick up allusions that hint to Levi as the *Shevet* that unified them all. The word **ויל**ן Yaakov slept begins with the letters of **לוי** for it was Levi who would be the instrumental stone to bind all the others into one. ויקח מאבני המקום the first three letters of **ויק**ח add up to 116 which is also the *gematriah* of **לוי** when spelled with its inner letters **למיד וו יוד**. Yaakov was sleeping at the place of the *Beis Hamikdash* which is called לשבתך **מבון** Shmos 15,17. Rashi explains that it is the base of the *Kisay Hakavod*. This is only possible because of the *achdus* that Shevet Levi spreads upon *Yisrael*. That is why **מבון** is *gematriah* **למיד וו יוד**. The *passuk* says וישם he placed the stones surrounding his head. The *gematriah* of **וישם** including the word is equal to **שבט לוי**. The purpose of placing the stones was see if *Shevet Levi* will be successful in bonding an *achdus* amongst twelve different *avodos* to Hashem. **שבט לוי** with the *kollel* equals **משיח** it is the power of *achdus* amongst *Yidden* that will bring *Moshiach*, that the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam.*

The Likutei Halachos writes in *Hilchos Shemoneh Esari* that there are 18 *berachos* in *Shemoneh Esrai*: the first three are acknowledging the Three *Avos*, the last three is our thank you, and the middle twelve are our requests from Hashem and they correspond to the 12 *Shevatim* each *Shevet* with their essential beseeching to Hashem. We can derive from this concept that the *Anshei Kenesset Hagadolah* took upon themselves the role of Shevet Levi whose mission is to unify *Klal Yisrael* and no matter what *Shevet* you originate from you should nevertheless *daven* on behalf of all the other *Shevetim* seeing yourself as one unified stone.

Shabbos in the Zohar is called רזא דאחד the secret of oneness. With Hashem's showering us with a *neshamah yesairah* of Shabbos we can feel the unity amongst us. Two bodies cannot be in the same space but two *neshamos* can. During the week our bodies crave physicality which makes separations and jealousy amongst other bodies. Shabbos is called יומא דנשמתא the day of the soul when every Yid feels part and parcel of one big neshamah. No wonder why the stone of Levi fitted onto the *Choshen* of the *Kohen Gadol* was called **ברקת** which is rooted in the word **בקר** morning or **ברק** lightening. While the days of the week possess darkness **אפלה** and non - clarity Shabbos and *Shevet Levi* bring a special light of truth to us dispelling all darkness in our heads and hearts. The word **אפלה** numerically equals למיד ו יוד the spelling of **לוי** with its inner letters. **ברקת** adds up to **שבת**. Shevet Levi like Shabbos is here to demonstrate ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ.

Some of these concepts were taken from the *sefer* זבר חסדו

Gut Shabbos

Rav Brazil