

From the K'li Yakar Jacob Solomon

This is the blessing that Moshe... gave the Israelites before his death (33:1).

Moshe's blessings to the Israelites as a maturing nation of twelve tribes parallel the earlier blessings of Yaakov to his twelve sons, who descendants were to become those twelve tribes. Like Yaakov, Moshe addressed each tribe individually, and then reached a climax with a final blessing for all Israel: "**Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like you? A people saved by G-d (33:29)...**"

All the tribes received individual blessings, except Shimon. Yaakov rebuked Shimon and Levi for their massacre of the people of Shechem (B'reishit 34:30) following the rape of their sister Dina. "Cursed be their anger for it is strong, and their vengeance for it is harsh. I will divide them amongst Ya'akov. I will scatter them amongst Israel" (B'reishit 49:7).

Indeed, both Shimon and Levi were "scattered amongst Israel" as neither received territory in their own right, but were allotted settlements within the areas of other tribes (Yehoshua 13:14; 19:1). Yet Moshe blessed Levi, but appeared to have left Shimon out.

The K'li Yakar explains that Shimon was not in fact left out. His blessing was included with Yehuda's, whose territory in due course he would share (Yehoshua 19:1). For unlike the other

tribes, Moshe did not open Yehuda's blessing with "Of Yehuda, he said..." but with "And this of Yehuda, he said". "And this" includes Shimon, with whom he would be living in close proximity.

The K'li Yakar continues by explaining the words of the actual blessing: "May G-d listen to the voice of Yehuda and return him to his people" (33:7). This sentence includes two simultaneous meanings. The simple sense is that Yehuda, the tribe of the future House of David, should succeed in its military campaigns and come safely back home. However, "May G-d listen to the voice of Yehuda" can also signify that G-d should heed the voice of prayer that Yehuda raised for Shimon. The prayer was to return the people of Shimon to the people of their own tribe: "return him to his people". For Yaakov's rebuke: "I will scatter them amongst Israel" meant that would be scattered amongst all the tribes. Yehuda prayed that they would be returned to their people, that they would live within one tribe with their settlements close enough to be in contact with one another and thus remain a tribal entity. Thus Moshe blessing Yehuda in this way at the same time blessed Shimon, by reinforcing Yehuda's prayer for Shimon.

It may also be observed that the other tribes had elements of distinction and leadership on which Moshe could focus his blessings. Zevulun's were in trade (33:18-19), Gad's were in the



military (33:20), Asher's were in farming (33:24), and so on. Levi had shown zeal in rallying to Moshe's orders following the sin of the Golden Calf, drastic as they were (33:9). In contrast, the tribe of Shimon showed apathy in the episode of Baal Peor (causing 24,000 deaths), whose leading figure was Zimri, himself of the tribe of Shimon. Though he openly challenged Moshe, nobody from the tribe of Shimon came forward to oppose him.

And this implies a salutary lesson for people. Everyone has special potential. In today's terms, it can be in advancing frontiers of expertise, communicating ideas and skills, taking care of the more vulnerable members of society, or creating works that raise the spirits of other people, to name but just a few. It is every individual life's work to identify that particular element and strive to develop it to the maximum. 🌱