

"And these are the names of Yisrael's children who came to Egypt." (46:8)

From the ensuing list of names, we see that all of Yaakov's children maintained their names. Only these original names are used whenever the children are mentioned in the *Torah*. By recording these names, the *Torah* emphasizes the importance of keeping names of Jewish origin especially when facing dangers of assimilation, such as those which threatened *Bnei Yisrael* who entered the Egyptian exile. Maintaining their Jewish names created for the Jewish people a moral and spiritual safeguard. It also served as a self-defense mechanism against the winds of assimilation. Indeed, one of the principle merits of *Bnei Yisrael* cited when they were redeemed from Egyptian bondage was that *they did not change their names*. This was their way of affirming their Jewish identity.

Horav Eli Munk, z.l., suggests that we consider another reason for enumerating each one of the tribes. In this instance, we see that all of the members of Yaakov's family lived together in perfect harmony. They were unified in the service of a single lofty ideal, and they stood prepared to defend this belief against any incursion. Like the branches of a tree which are all nourished from one root, the seventy members of this Patriarchal family received their spiritual nourishment from one source. This family served as the nucleus of *Am Yisrael*. Therefore, it is of great consequence to record the names of these family members for posterity. Similarly, it is appropriate to accentuate this portrayal of an ancient Patriarchal family, resolute in faith, pious in action, and esteemed by Egyptian royalty. Highlighting this distinguished family illustrates that the origins of *Am Yisrael* were neither from some recluse nomadic tribe, nor from a group of disoriented revolutionaries, nor from an august brotherhood of prophets, but rather from a family whose origins were untainted by any form of defilement.