

"Of every tribe a thousand, of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Yisrael you shall send to the war." (31:4)

Rashi explains that the phrase "*throughout all the tribes of Yisrael*" includes the tribe of *Levi* with the other tribes. The commentators find this statement difficult to understand. In the next *pasuk*, the *Torah* clearly states that only twelve thousand men, representing twelve tribes, went forth as soldiers. "*And there were delivered out of the thousands of Yisrael, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.*" If the tribe of *Levi* was included among the soldiers, there should have been thirteen thousand!

Rav Avraham Mordechai M'Gur, z.l., suggests the following explanation. As stated in this *parsha*, Moshe's imminent departure from this world was contingent upon this war, as it is stated, "*Avenge the vengeance of Bnei Yisrael; afterward you shall be gathered unto your people.*" When *Bnei Yisrael* saw that their beloved leader would die soon after this war, they were undoubtedly reluctant to go forward to enlist in this endeavor. It is for this reason that the *Torah* states, "*They were delivered.*" They were compelled to go, even against their will. The members of the tribe of *Levi*, however, had previously proven themselves to be unique. Their devotion to Hashem transcended even the closest family ties. When they were implored to kill those who had sinned with the Golden Calf, they went forward resolutely to perform this task. They did not distinguish family members. Their complete focus was upon faithfully carrying out their mission.

Hashem's will transcended the love the tribe of *Levi* had for their *rebbe*, Moshe. They were probably the only tribe which was willing to go forward and perform the deed of their own volition. Consequently, thirteen thousand soldiers, including the tribe of *Levi*, entered the army. Twelve thousand of those soldiers, however, had to be "persuaded" to enter this service. One thousand of them went on their own.

We may derive from this *pasuk* that objectivity on the part of a *Ben Torah* is imperative. A true *Torah* devotee should be able to transcend his own sensitivities toward family and tendencies towards nepotism. Personal loyalties and considerations of kinship should not cloud one's total commitment to Hashem. Indeed, the *Sefer Ha'Chinuch* explains that the tribe of *Levi's* objectivity was the prime reason for their designation as the protectors of the unintentional murderers who fled to the *Arai Miklat*, Cities of Refuge. Their compassionate quality and their profound spiritual affinity especially suited them for this role.

The *Leviim* were trusted not to kill an unintentional murderer, even if he had slain a good friend or close relative of theirs. Following the episode of the Golden Calf, the *Leviim* demonstrated that their total commitment to Hashem and His *Torah* went beyond any personal attachments and allegiances. The *Leviim's* total adherence should serve as a powerful paradigm for us all.