

The one who said of his father and mother, “I have not favored him.” (33:9)

As Moshe *Rabbeinu* prepares to take leave of his flock, he blesses the members of each tribe. He points out their inherent positive qualities and he underscores those areas of their character which require improvement. To pat a person on the back and not inform him of his shortcomings can be self-defeating. In addressing *Shevet Levi*, Moshe notes the members' incredible devotion to Hashem, their commitment which was revealed during the *chet ha'eigel*, sin of the Golden Calf. When everyone else sinned, they refrained from getting involved in the sacrilege. Moshe had then called out, *Mi l'Hashem eilai*, “Who is for Hashem, should stand by me!” *Shevet Levi* answered the call and, upon Moshe's order, took their swords and slew members of their own families: a maternal grandfather; a grandson from their daughter; a brother from the same mother. There is no question that they loved their family members; that love, however, was just not as great as the love and allegiance that they maintained for Hashem.

These actions certainly portray the lofty spiritual achievements of the members of *Shevet Levi*. They were unlike any other tribe in their total devotion to Hashem. This is specifically why it is surprising that Moshe concludes his accolade, “For they (the *Leviim*) have observed Your word, and Your Covenant they preserved.” Is this praiseworthy of such spiritual supermen? After saying that they did not recognize father and mother, is it necessary to add that they were also observant Jews? Observing Hashem's *mitzvos*, preserving His covenant, is standard fare for every Jew.

In *Gevilei Eish*, **Horav Avraham Zelmens, zl**, derives a powerful lesson from here. The spiritual giant who has achieved distinction in his service of Hashem, regardless of his enormous accomplishments, must still be meticulous concerning the “every day,” “ordinary” *mitzvos* which seem to pale in comparison with what he has so far achieved. One should not say: “I carry an entire Jewish world on my shoulders;” “I have very little time or patience for the young couple who needs my guidance;” “*Davening* is important, but if it stands in the way of a major meeting to help *Klal Yisrael*, I will just have to cut my *davening* down a bit.” The list goes on. Everyone has the opportunity for accomplishing great things. This is important – all this is why we are here; but no one should do anything at the expense of his basic relationship with Hashem. It may be compared to those individuals who make sure that their heart and brain are in perfect health, while at the same time disregard a minor infection that, because it had been ignored, becomes septic and almost ends his life.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* adds that we all know ordinary, good, observant Jews who are meticulous in their day-to-day observance, and succeed in overcoming the challenges that often stand before them. When these upstanding members of our community are asked to accept a more demanding position, however, one of leadership, one which is fraught with challenges, they back down. There are also those who thrive on the major issues, who sustain themselves by fighting for *Klal Yisrael*, for such collective issues as *Shabbos*, *Kashrus*, and Torah, but when it comes to the everyday non-

challenging *mitzvos*, they simply cannot deal with them. *Mitzvah* performance is an ego enhancer for them. They require the *klal* work; otherwise, they might get bored with *Yiddishkeit*. The true *oseik b'tzarchei tzibbur*, one who occupies himself on the spiritual frontlines, working on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*, does the same for the "little guy": for the abandoned woman whose recalcitrant husband acts with a total lack of impunity; to the boy and girl who are at risk, but do not have the luxury of coming from a pedigreed family; for the many families who just need someone to talk to, someone to hold their hand and guide them. The list goes on.

It is a no-brainer to be a *klal tuer* because that is how one receives accolades. One who has an ego deficiency will invariably trend toward those *mitzvos* and good deeds which call attention to himself. *Shevet Levi* personified true greatness. The members of this tribe accepted the challenges, the challenges of rising up against a nation gone mad, engrossed in sinful orgy. They stood up to close family. They protected the moral purity and pristine spiritual essence of our nation. This was, however, not executed at the expense of lesser *mitzvos*, which preserve the covenant between our people and Hashem. Theirs was a total commitment, to all people, under all circumstances.