

"He became king over Yeshurun when the numbers/leaders of the nation gathered the tribes of Yisrael in unity." (33:5)

Virtually all of the commentators translate "*roshei am*" as the leaders of the nation. *Rashi*, however, seems to disagree. He translates it as, "the numbers," referring to the inclusion of *all* Jews under one unified banner. Regardless of definition, the *pasuk* emphasizes the need for unity in the midst of *Am Yisrael* in order to effect "Hashem becoming king."

Horav Aharon Rotter, Shlita, cites the "*Eish Dos*," who contends that it is impossible to have a unified nation unless the people all follow the dictates of the *gedolei ha'dor*, *Torah* leadership of each generation.

The *Eish Dos* uses this thesis to explain an apparent contradiction between two passages in the *Talmud*. In *Meseches Shabbos 119b*, *Chazal* attribute the destruction of the *Bais Ha'Mikdash* to a distorted sense of equality between people of various stations in life. They drew no distinction between the *gedolim*, great leaders, and the *ketanim*, those of lesser status. In *Meseches Yuma 99*, however, *Chazal* attribute the *Churban*, destruction, to *sinaas chinam*, unmitigated and unwarranted hatred between people. These two statements of *Chazal* are seemingly inconsistent. One would think that equality among people, not distinguishing between leadership and commoner, should serve as the prototype for harmony. Why did this catalyze the discord that caused the *churban Bais Ha'Mikdash* ?

This represents a distorted conception of equality. In any nation or organization people must function at diverse levels, performing their specific duties. In the human body, some organs play a more significant role than others in maintaining a person's health. Likewise, organizations which have many leaders -- but no one to carry out the necessary tasks -- will not function effectively. The spiritual leadership of *Klal Yisrael* functions as the "head" of the body of our People. To distort their preeminence is to denigrate the very fibre of their primacy. The tendency to "equalize" everyone's position does not originate from a drive for unity, but rather emanates from an insidious passion for self-aggrandizement at the expense of others.

Horav Rotter suggests that this is the message of our *pasuk*. True unity in *Klal Yisrael* will not be attained until everyone acquiesces to the strictures of the *Gedolei Yisrael*.