

"The Bnei Yisrael should encamp each man by his banner/flag according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Ohel Moed." (2:2)

Bnei Yisrael were divided into formations of three tribes each. These formations were known as *degalim*, banners/flags. They represented the grouping of the tribes according to their history, personality and individual strengths. The *degalim* took effect one year after *Bnei Yisrael*'s liberation from the Egyptian bondage. We may wonder why Hashem waited so long to form the designated encampments and divisions. Why were they not arranged in their distinct order immediately upon their exodus from Egypt?

Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, offers a practical insight which carries with it a timeless message. The division of *Bnei Yisrael* into harmonious but distinct groups could potentially create feelings of isolation. Envy and conflict could easily develop between these groups. Suddenly, each individual might think he was better than his friend; his ideas were more progressive than his friend's, and, ultimately, his religious perspective was more appropriate. Only after the *Mishkan* - the central source of religious perspective - was built, was it safe to create the *degalim*.

Once everyone was focused upon the same central point from which *Torah* emanated, they were each free to acknowledge their inherent equality, each one fulfilling the will of Hashem according to his level and ability. The *Mishkan* was the amalgam which bonded *Bnei Yisrael* together. It integrated the character and strength of each of the various tribes, so that they all integrated to represent the *Torah* view -for that is what they all desired to achieve. Hence, during the first year after leaving Egypt, before the *Mishkan* had been built. *Bnei Yisrael* were not prepared to be divided into separate groups.