“Shimon and Levi are brothers… Into their conspiracy, may my soul not enter…Accursed is their rage for it is intense... I will separate them within Yaakov, and I will disperse them in Yisrael.” (49:5-7)

Horav S. R. Hirsch, z.l., notes that Shimon and Levi exhibited a distinctive character trait that under normal circumstances would have constituted a basis for granting them a dominant role over *Klal Yisrael*: They were “*achim*,” brothers. They had elevated the value of communal brotherhood to an extremely high level. Completely free of egoism, both of them were affected by any wrong done to even the least important member of the family circle. To hurt a member of the family was to injure each one of them personally. In response, their collective rage, although perfectly justified, was unharnessed. They killed men whose indifference to Shechem’s violation of Dinah indicated their silent support of his dastardly act. Had they confined their rage to the culprit, perhaps Yaakov *Avinu* might not have been as critical of them.

Rage cannot catalyze a blessing. The natural consequence of their impulsivity was a curse. Unbridled anger is a character trait that renders a person unfit for leadership. *Horav* Hirsch notes the significance of Yaakov *Avinu’s* words to the emerging nation. At the laying of the cornerstone of the Jewish nation it was of profound importance to emphasize that every violation of the laws of morality and justice, even those performed in the best interests of the community, produces a curse. Cunning, guile and brute force, which in private life never go unpunished, result in accolades and civic honors in the public sector. The laws of morality exist only for private life. In politics and diplomacy, the only code of ethics that is recognized is the one that supports the party or the state. The original testament for the Jewish nation presented here placed a curse on all trickery and violence, even if they are allegedly executed on behalf of the public interest. We are, thereby, taught that the end does not justify the means, regardless whether or not the beneficiary is an individual or the entire community.

Yaakov says, “*I will separate them within Yaakov, and I will disperse them in Yisrael*.” “*Achalkem,*” I will separate/divide them up, not with the intention of breaking up a whole, but rather to portion out something valuable. “*Afitzeim,*” I will disperse/scatter them, is to divide something up into the smallest possible pieces so that nothing remains intact of the original whole. The name “Yaakov” is a reference to *Klal Yisrael* in *galus*, exile, where they are depressed and persecuted. “Yisrael,” on the other hand, is the name which implies strength, power and victory. Accordingly, the danger to the general well-being of our People as a result of Shimon’s and Levi’s excessive impetuosity and irascible disposition, presents itself only at a time when *Klal Yisrael* is flourishing. It is manifest when the nation consists of a powerful body of people who can easily be influenced by two close-knit tribes filled with feelings of strength and power, coupled with unity and brotherhood. In a flourishing state of Yisrael, Shimon and Levi must be separated. This actually happened. *Shevet* Levi was to be entirely dependent upon its brethren for sustenance. When the land was

apportioned, they received no province at all. *Shevet* Shimon's portion was in an enclave, blocked in entirely and greatly dependent upon its more powerful neighbor, Yehudah. Thus, when *Klal Yisrael* was in a flourishing state, Shimon and Levi's political influence was totally impeded.

During our times of persecution, when we are subject to the trials and tribulations of the *galus* experience, there is a clear and present danger that the people's feeling of inconsequence and sense of oppression will destroy their spiritual energy. It is under these circumstances that the phrase, "*v'achalkem b'Yaakov*," "I will separate them within Yaakov," is of critical import. The greatest benefit to the broken, downtrodden Jews of Europe, scattered and persecuted throughout the world, was the fact that the tribes of Shimon and Levi were "scattered" along with them. Their presence helped to elevate the feelings of self-esteem within the Jew, the sense of belonging to a proud nation. It reinforced their pride in their religion and the satisfaction of maintaining their conviction in the face of extreme challenge. The fiery passion of Shimon and Levi kept alive the energy and courage, the fire and noble Jewish pride, the enduring Jewish spirit, which outlived the loss of the Jewish state. Indeed, as *Chazal* teach us, the most important contingent of Jewish teachers, scholars and scribes descended from Shimon and Levi. They imbued the children who, as they grew into adulthood, carried forth the zeal and passion to function as a proud and committed Jew. Yaakov *Avinu's* critique was actually a profound blessing in disguise. Is that not often the case?