

These shall stand to bless the people on Har Gerizim, when you have crossed the Yarden: Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar, Yosef and Binyamin. (27:12)

As soon as the nation entered the Land, the people were to assemble at two mountains to re-accept the Torah. Twelve commandments would be enumerated, which the people would acknowledge publicly, affirming their understanding that those who observed these commandments would be blessed and those who reneged them would be cursed. Representatives of six tribes would stand on one mountain (*Har Gerizim*) for blessing, and representatives of the other six tribes would stand opposite on the other mountain (*Har Eival*) for curse. The twelve commandments which were Divinely selected are such acts that can be carried out covertly. A subtle message underscored the lack of distinction between public and private morality. One was either moral or a sinner. The place where he carried out his rebellion against G-d did not matter. Second, as noted by *Sforno*, the sins were of the type that were, sadly, common among the powerful and influential members of the nation. Hashem was conveying a message to them: power and influence neither permits nor absolves the individual of the consequences of the commission of evil.

Having said this, we take note of the structure of the tribes who stood on each mountain. We will focus on the mountain reserved for blessing: *Har Gerizim*. Why are the tribes not divided as they were on the *Eiphod* (according to birth) with Shimon and Levi together, and Yosef and Binyamin bringing up the flank? Second, when they divided the tribes for the *Degelim*, Banners, Yosef was split into Menashe and Efraim, while here it is Yosef alone. What is unique about this scenario that the sequence, and even names of the participants, are altered?

Horav Bentzion Firer, zl, quotes the well-known maxim from the *Talmud* (*Uktzim* 3:12), "Hashem did not find a vessel that would hold blessing for *Yisrael* other than *shalom*, peace." In simple vernacular: The only way to receive *brachah*, blessing, is when peace and harmony reigns. Why bless a situation/organization/group that is embraced in strife? Blessing is a way of saying: I like what you are doing. I agree with your intentions. I support your cause/*yeshivah*, institution/*chaburah*, endeavor. I want it to succeed. When people do not get along, they strike out before even going to bat. Why would Hashem want to support people who do not get along with one another?

Thus, it was critical that the mountain that represented blessing should, likewise, reflect the highest aspect of *shalom*. Otherwise, it was self-undermined, with no hope for realistic, enduring blessing. Shimon and Levi had a problem with Yosef – not with Menashe and Efraim, but with Yosef. True, the other brothers had issues with Yosef, but nothing like those evinced by Shimon and Levi. No blessing can exist without peace. In order to affect blessing on *Har Gerizim*, Shimon/Levi had to make peace with Yosef. This was reflected by their standing together as one harmonious, unified group.

What about Binyamin? Does he, too, belong there? Yes! Clearly, Binyamin must have had feedback concerning what had happened concerning his brother. It must be traumatic to hear one's brothers plotting to kill his only brother from the same mother. We cannot say for certain that Binyamin harbored ill will against Shimon and Levi, but one thing is probably true: he did not necessarily have strong filial feelings of connectedness toward them. He, too, needed to put his feelings aside, make peace and stand together with Shimon and Levi on *Har Gerizim*.

Yehudah had a place of honor on that mountain. While it was true that Reuven sought to prevent his brothers' from actively murdering Yosef, it was Yehudah who sought to spare his life and reinstate him into the family. Reuven suggested throwing Yosef in the pit, where he might die on his own; Yehudah encouraged selling him as a slave.

Yissachar seems to be the odd man out. He had nothing to do with saving Yosef. Why was he on the mountain? Yissachar represents the *talmid chacham*, the Torah scholar, who increases *shalom* in the world. No one was more appropriate than Yissachar to round out the six tribes who would symbolize *Klal Yisrael's* blessing.

So – Yosef was there – not Menashe and Efraim – because it was about the *kli machazik shalom*, the vessel which would hold peace. Menashe and Efraim had never been embroiled in the controversy. Yehudah and Reuven were the saviors. Yissachar was the *ben Torah/talmid chacham* who (is supposed to) exemplifies *shalom*.

The *Pele Yoetz* writes: "It is not enough to (simply) personally be at peace with people (to get along and make every attempt to prevent oneself from falling into the abyss of controversy). One must see to it to spread unity among people, to increase marital harmony. Indifference to dispute which rages among others is tantamount to supporting *machlokes*, controversy.

One might argue that he is not qualified to be a marriage counselor or a peacemaker. Does that make him culpable? Well, as we will observe from the following story, one can save a marriage simply by giving a well-laced, well-meaning compliment at the right time. That could mean the difference in saving a marriage – and even a life.

A young man, member of the *Kollel* in Ramat Elchanan, related the following incident. As he was leaving the *Kollel* one morning, he was approached by a distinguished member of the Bnei Brak rabbinate, an individual who had achieved enormous success in helping to promote and maintain marital harmony between husband and wife, who – due to various pressures, personal inconsistencies and dysfunction – were at the brink of dissolving their marriage. The *Rav* said, "I want to commend and thank you for helping to save a marriage. I had tried numerous times to convince this couple to make peace, but I was just not successful. You did it with a simple compliment!"

The young man was clueless. He did not know anyone who was on the brink of divorce. He

certainly did not remember doing anything to save a marriage. The look on his face bespoke his incredulity. The *Rav* explained, "A week ago, you went over to a certain father and told him how impressed you were with his son's *hasmadah*, diligence, in Torah study. You supplemented your compliment with a blessing, saying that parents who can raise such a child must truly be special people, worthy of blessing. You have no idea how you saved the father. The man was suffering from serious self-esteem issues, struggling to find any positive aspect to who he was. He had given up on life, and he felt he could do nothing to help himself. Needless to say, his marriage had lacked vibrancy and meaning, since he was no longer a partner; he had become a depressed spectator. Your compliment turned his life around, engendering within him a feeling of hope and self-worth. He returned home with the feeling that his life was worth living. You saved a person and a family!"

It takes so little to accomplish so much, if we only care and put our mind to it.