

And Yisrael encamped there opposite the mountain. (19:2)

Rashi notes that the verb *va'yichan* is written in the singular. This teaches that the entire nation encamped *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, “as one person with one heart,” so great was their sense of unity. Only when we are united in our commitment to Hashem, each of us maintaining a single, unified desire to serve Him, are we worthy of the name Yisrael. No hatred, no envy, only love and caring – that is how we approached *Har Sinai*. **Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl**, explains that this is why, in the well-known *Dayeinu* segment of the *Haggadah*, we say, “If He would have (just) brought us near to *Har Sinai*, and not given us the Torah – *Dayeinu*; it would have been sufficient.” How can this be enough? The purpose of *Har Sinai* and everything that preceded it, was to receive the Torah. What was to be gained from coming to *Har Sinai* and leaving without the Torah? Now that we perceive the unprecedented unity that reigned among the Jewish People, to the point that they all felt as one person, we understand the unique “gift” of coming to *Har Sinai*. It was worth it alone just to achieve such an overwhelming sense of unity.

We may add that when the Angel gave Yaakov *Avinu* the name Yisrael, he said, *ki sarissa im Elokim v'im anashim va'tuchal*, “For you have contended with the Divine and with man and prevailed” (*Bereishis* 32:29). The name Yisrael given to the Patriarch is a name that implies strength, control, balance. As the nation is called Yisrael only when they achieve unity, so, too, is the individual Jew called Yisrael, when his entire essence – every organ including his heart and mind, are all subjugated and focused on one G-d, one mission, one purpose. This merger of oneself, this fusion of one's entire body in perfect harmony to serve Hashem, is what determines a Jew's strength and his worthiness of being called a Yisrael.

Hashem says to the nation, *V'Atah im shamo'a tishmeu b'Koli u'shemartem es Brisi, v'heyisem Li segulah mikol ha'amim*, “And now, if you will earnestly listen to My voice, and will keep My covenant, then you must belong to Me exclusively (*segulah*), more than all the nations” (*Shemos* 19:5). **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, interprets *segulah* as an exclusive possession to which no one else except its owner is entitled, and which has no relationship to anyone except its owner. Thus, when Hashem applies the word *segulah* to define our relationship with Him, He is basically saying: “You belong to Me, exclusively and completely with every aspect of our nature, with all our being and with all our aspirations. He asks that we make all of our existence and all of our aspirations dependent upon Him alone, to permit Him to shape them all to allow nothing and no one else to direct our lives or influence our actions. That is the definition of Yisrael. One who has achieved harmony of body and soul, who has gained “*Yisrael*” status, becomes a *segulah* to Hashem. This is what took place at *Har Sinai* – and what we can achieve on a regular basis – if we work at it.