

## Yehudah – you, your brothers shall acknowledge. (49:8) A charming son is Yosef. (49:22)

In Yaakov *Avinu's* blessings to his sons, we see the Patriarch delineate the specific area of *avodas Hashem*, service to Hashem, of each individual tribe. Together, their service coalesces and the purpose of Creation is realized. Each tribe's personality was different. This variation reflected a different approach to *avodas Hashem*. Yaakov's blessing ensured that the *shefa*, spiritual flow from Above, would be endemic to the requirements of each individual *shevet*, tribe.

The blessings of the Patriarch singled out two tribes for monarchy: Yehudah and Yosef. Each was uniquely suited for his role of leadership, based upon his individual character traits. **Horav Chaim Friedlander, zl**, explains that the character of their individual monarchies was founded in their unique character traits – as observed by their father, Yaakov.

*Yehudah, atah yoducha achecha*, “Yehudah – you, your brothers shall acknowledge” (49:8). *Chazal* explain that Yehudah received the monarchy as a result of his ability to confess his role in the episode of Tamar. He conceded that it was none other than he with whom she had her liaison. This took exemplary character. To be able to admit his role publicly and risk public censure takes incredible strength of character. An individual who executes such amazing control over himself, who takes responsibility for his actions – despite what the opinion of others might be – such a person is capable of leading the nation. One who rules over himself can rule over others. Yehudah's distinction was derived from his self-effacement, his ability to lower himself when necessary. One who arrogates himself over others does not function as an effective leader.

From where did Yehudah derive such character? His mother, Leah *Imeinu*, named him Yehudah, using the words, *ha'paam odeh es Hashem*, “This time let me gracefully praise Hashem” (*Bereishis* 29:34). *Odeh* connotes the root that means thankful and praise – the basis of Yehudah's name. *Hodaah al ha'emes*, the ability to concede to the truth, and *hakoras ha'tov*, acknowledgement of and offering gratitude, have the same source: the ability to deflate oneself. *Hachnaah*, the ability to lower oneself – to act inobtrusively, not to call attention to himself, to self-abnegate for the sake of others – is a prerequisite for concession. One who is unable to concede is likewise unable to acknowledge that he is the recipient of another fellow's favor. Before one can say, “Thank you,” he must first concede that someone has done something to benefit him.

This character trait was later exhibited by Yehudah's grandson, David *Hamelech*, with his immortal words in *Sefer Tehillim* (136:1), *Hodu l'Hashem ki tov*, “Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good.” Indeed, the entire book of *Tehillim* is a book of praise to the Almighty. The Davidic dynasty, heralding back to Yehudah, is founded in the *middah*, character trait, of *hachanaah*. This was inherited from Leah, who *Chazal* describe as, *Tafsah pelach hodaah*, “She grabbed the domain of concession.” Leah understood the meaning of acknowledging others, of paying gratitude when and where it is due.

Yosef also achieved monarchy, but from an entirely different source. *Ben pores Yosef*, “A charming son is Yosef” (ibid 49:22). *Targum Unkeles* translates those words as, *Bri d’yisgei Yosef*, “A son who has achieved, who has exemplified himself, is Yosef.” Yosef became a monarch due to his perfection, his greatness, his exemplary character and righteousness. He became the king because of his unique qualities. Yehudah achieved monarchy as a result of his acquiescence.

*Malchus Yosef*, the monarchy of Yosef, is founded on *sheleimus*, perfection; the *malchus* of Yehudah is based upon *hachnaah*, submissiveness. Every honor that Yosef received from Pharaoh was reward for his perfection in areas of morality. He elevated every organ of his body to serve Hashem by rejecting sin with Potifar’s wife. Hashem rewarded him with incredible powers granted by the Egyptian king. Perfection, however, is a difficult plateau to achieve. Not everyone can scale the heights that lead to such lofty wholesomeness. Indeed, the level of Yosef is on a higher plane than that of Yehudah. Only a select few are able to achieve *sheleimus*.

As with all high achievements, they are difficult to attain and even more difficult to maintain. Shaul *Hamelech* is a prime example of an individual who achieved monarchy because of his high level of *sheleimus*, but could not hold on to it for long. Shaul sinned once concerning Agag, King of Amalek. This one sin was held against him, causing him to lose his place as monarch over *Klal Yisrael*. David *Hamelech* achieved his position due to his submissive character, his ability to back out of the limelight. Thus, despite the fact that *Chazal* recorded two indiscretions on his part, he was still able to maintain the *meluchah*. What is the difference? Shaul became *melech*, king, as a result of his perfection. The flip side is that it does not take much to taint something, thereby rendering it imperfect. David *Hamelech* was a scion of Yehudah, inheriting his distinguished forebear’s ability to subdue himself, to act with simple modesty, to concede his error, to accept the blame and assume responsibility. More leeway exists to work with someone who has achieved his position as a penitent, as a meek, subdued person who is not filled with “himself.”

The Jewish People are called *Yehudim* after Yehudah. The *kiyum*, survival of our people, is based upon the characteristics endemic to Yehudah. The ability to lay low, not to call attention to ourselves, to accept our destiny with acquiescence and hope, to continue to serve Hashem under all circumstances – regardless of their toll on our physical, material and emotional dimension – is what Yehudah represents. This is what we are – and why Hashem will be with us until the advent of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*.