

"All that were numbered of the Leviim, whom Moshe and Aharon numbered... All the males from a month old and upward, were twenty two thousand." (3:39)

Ramban takes note of the fact that the members of the tribe of Levi were fewer than the other tribes in number. Although they had been counted from the age of a month old and above (unlike the other tribes who were counted only from the age of twenty years and over), they still numbered only twenty two thousand. It is astonishing that Hashem's servants and pious devotees should not be blessed to the extreme that the rest of the people were. *Ramban* suggests that this is a confirmation of *Chazal's* statement in *Midrash Tanchuma* that the tribe of Levi was not subject to the Egyptian bondage which was imposed on the rest of the tribes. Because *Bnei Yisrael's* lives were made bitter by the Egyptians through hard labor in order to diminish them, Hashem miraculously increased them to compensate for the Egyptians' decree.

The tribe of Levi, however, which was not subject to this affliction, increased in a normal way; consequently, the tribe of Levi did not grow in numbers as significantly as the other tribes. *Ramban* inferred from this and other evidence that the fact that *Bnei Yisrael* were numerous was not in accordance with the laws of "nature," but was actually a miracle. Indeed, the tribe of Yehudah, which was the largest, descended from Yehuda's three sons. The tribe of Dan, which was second in number, descended from Dan's only son, Chushim, who was deaf. The tribe of Binyamin, which descended from Binyamin's ten sons, was ironically not numerous. *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein Z"l* suggests that this is Hashem's method of protecting and nurturing the weak and downtrodden. Hashem maintains a delicate balance of personal contingencies. Through His Divine Providence He provides for each individual in accordance with his needs. Our responsibility is only to put our complete trust in Him.