

Bring near the tribe of Levi and have it stand before Aharon HaKohen, and they shall serve him. (3:6)

Shevet Levi was consecrated to a life of service, *avodas ha'kodesh*, holy service, both in the Sanctuary and as Torah teachers. The Levi set the standard for Jews to acknowledge and put to action: one does not live solely for himself. We are here to live a life of service – to Hashem and to the Jewish community. Concerning this *pasuk* (*Hakreiv es mateh Levi*), the *Midrash* quotes the *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim* (92:13): *Tzaddik katamar yifrach k'erez ba'levanon yisgeh*, “A righteous man will flourish like a date palm, like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall.” The *Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh* says: there are two types of *tzaddikim*: one is compared to a date palm; the other to a tall cedar.

Every waking moment of one type of *tzaddik* is taken up with serving Hashem. Regrettably, he is so involved with his personal growth that he is unable to “spread the wealth,” to reach out and inspire others. He is likened to the tall cedar tree, strong and erect, but sadly non-fruit bearing. A *tzaddik* whose righteousness does not produce fruit, who does not inspire those around him, is still a *tzaddik*, and, by virtue of his presence in a community, he elevates its spiritual level. Nonetheless, he does not directly influence other Jews who are in dire need of his inspiration.

The second type of *tzaddik* is compared to a date palm, which flourishes and provides shade and luscious fruit. The *tamar* blooms and flourishes, appellations which serve the environment, while the cedar grows tall, implying its self-serve nature.

I would like to address another aspect of the *tamar*. *Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl*, observes a unique quality which is endemic only to the date palm: the height it achieves above ground coincides with the depth of its roots! In other words, the roots of a palm tree that is twenty feet high, are commensurately twenty feet deep into the ground. *Rav Shimshon* suggests that this characteristic is likewise delineated in the unique difference between men and women with regard to their individual achievements and greatness.

Man's greatness is achieved “above ground,” externally manifesting his personality and erudition. Women are just as great, only they have mastered the built-in proclivity toward *tznius*, privacy/modesty. They do not require the public forum as do men. Thus, I think when we see a great, (spiritually) tall, *tzaddik*, we can be certain that there is an equally great and tall *tzadeikes*, righteous wife, who serves as his foundation, the roots that nurture and give him the strength and ability to maintain his height.

With this idea in mind, we might add to the distinction between *tamar* and *erez*: their wives, their foundation, rooted deep in the ground. It is most difficult to reach out, to challenge the strong winds of anti-Torah challenges that prevail. To help others, one must be firmly entrenched in his spiritual ground. He requires the constant support and encouragement of an *eizer k'negdo*, the helpmate

who accompanies him throughout his life's journey. Otherwise, he might just grow tall – but there is always the danger that without a rock-solid, deep foundation, the tree/he could topple in a strong wind.