

## **"Shimon and Levi are brothers... Into their conspiracy let my soul not enter... For in their anger they killed people and at their whim they maimed an ox." (49:5,6,7)**

*Rashi* explains the two sins to which Yaakov is referring, which occurred at Shechem, where in their "anger" the two brothers destroyed an entire city. The reference to an ox alludes to selling Yosef as a slave. At first glance, these two sins seem to be two isolated cases in which Shimon and Levi, provoked by anger, acted inappropriately. The *Kesav Sofer*, however, notes a fascinating connection between the two, which suggests a stimulating idea.

Why did Shimon and Levi totally destroy Shechem? They felt that one of their own flesh and blood, their sister Dinah, was debased in a terrible manner. This violation could not go unpunished. They forgot one issue, however. While they were expressing their concern for their sister, they completely disregarded the fact that the individual they were persecuting, the one they were selling to a life of slavery and pain, was none other than their brother Yosef! If they had been so concerned for their own flesh and blood, why did they ignore Yosef's pleas? Where was their compassion and sense of justice when they were persecuting their own brother?

This blatant case of misplaced priorities, or just plain prejudice, is an example of something of which we are all guilty at times. How often do we decry a wrong if its perpetrator is someone with whom we have no affiliation, but look the other way when one of "our own" commits the same deed? Do we recognize a double standard in which a deed is improper if executed by someone else, but deemed appropriate -- or even virtuous -- when we commit the same act? Consistency in perspective is as important as it is in behavior.