

## **Hearken, O'Hashem, to Yehudah's voice. (33:7)**

Shimon did not receive an individual blessing. This was the result of the involvement of the tribe of Shimon in the Shittim tragedy, when their Nasi, Prince, Zimri, had illicit relations with Kozbi, the Midyanite princess, and they supported him. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu concealed Shimon's blessing within Yehudah's by using the word shema, listen. The root of the name Shimon is also shema, hear, as Leah Imeinu said when she named Shimon: Shama Hashem b'anyi, "Hashem heard my affliction" (Bereishis 29:33).

Shimon's tribe received a portion in Eretz Yisrael, but the Torah does not refer to it as "Shimon's portion." Instead, it is absorbed within Yehudah's portion, to the point that the two tribes could hardly be distinguished one from another. The pasuk above alludes to this absorption, just as Shimon's blessing is included within Yehudah's blessing.

Let us analyze Shimon's "punishment." Are the members of the tribe of Shimon to be forever censured because they defended their Nasi? Clearly, they should have known that Moshe was right and Zimri was wrong. Zimri, however, was their Nasi and they defended him. Were they that incorrect? Furthermore, the idea that Moshe was exacting "revenge" is atypical of Moshe's character.

In his Haamek Davar, the Netziv, zl, explains that Moshe's unusual actions were actually his way of addressing Shimon's natural character and tendencies, thereby enabling him to achieve the greatest benefit in life.

Our first exposure to Shimon is when he and his brother, Levi, acting in defense of Dinah's honor, their violated sister, destroyed an entire city. They both were incensed and, with great intensity, together they exacted their revenge. Superficially, their actions and intentions seem to parallel one another. The Netziv explains, however, that this was only an external façade. Actually, Shimon's

purpose in attacking Shechem did not coincide with that of Levi. Levi was defending Hashem's honor, for if people would lose respect for the house of Yaakov, who represented Hashem, it would, by extension, be a disgrace to the Almighty's Name. Dinah was a member of Yaakov's family. To violate her was to besmirch the family name. This was, in effect, a desecration of Hashem's Name. To defend Dinah was to defend Hashem.

Shimon's motives, however, were to preserve the family's reputation. He had strong feelings of loyalty to the family name – not because they represented Hashem, but because they were his family. For Shimon, avenging Dinah was defending his family's honor.

Both brothers fought for their family: Both demonstrated intense fidelity to their family, albeit for diverse intentions. Levi fought for Hashem's honor; the family was the medium. Shimon fought for the family's honor; the family was the ultimate target of his actions. These divergent attitudes played out several generations later when a member of Shimon's family had an encounter with a representative of Levi's. It was Pinchas, scion of the tribe of Levi, who came up against Zimri, a descendant of Shimon. Pinchas' intense loyalty was linked to Hashem, while Zimri's supporters identified intensely with the preservation of family honor. Levi's characteristic came out "on top," his actions ratified by Hashem, in whose honor Pinchas acted. Shimon's actions engendered disaster, since this was a time in which family honor was not to be supported, because it was counter to the honor of Hashem.

Shimon's intensity on behalf of family is a characteristic that required moderation. It is a wonderful trait, but it must be balanced in accordance with time and place. If family honor does not coincide with Hashem's honor, then one must prioritize Hashem's honor. This was the error of the tribe of Shimon. Their support of Zimri was misplaced. Therefore, their blessing came in the form of a curse. Shimon should have been able to control his intensity in order to use it only for noble and productive purposes.

Shimon's absorption in Yehudah's land benefited both of them. Yehudah's power is in his mouth. The very name, Yehudah, means "admission," which is the recognition of the truth. To confess is to concede to the truth. This is Yehudah's unique quality: never fearing to express the truth. It is the only way to live. As the Netziv explains, however, truthfulness is only one component in the amalgam required to compose Sefer Tehillim. Its praises are lofty and true, and they also reflect extreme intensity. This was a quality that Yehudah had to "borrow" from Shimon. The tribe of

Shimon was so integrated in Yehudah's land that the two tribes had become one and the same. It was Shimon's power of intensity concealed within Yehudah that enabled David Ha'melech, scion of Yehudah, to create this paradigm of truth with acuteness, passion and veracity – the sefer that has been the handbook of the Jew as he has wandered throughout his exile.

Sefer Tehillim expresses a Jew's most heartfelt emotions, feelings that are pent-up within him, which pour forth from the inner recesses of his soul. It is the Jew's personal conversation with the Almighty, in which he uncovers his truthful feelings of love for his Creator. They are offered with passion and longing, ardor and hope for his Father in Heaven. Just as David Ha'melech, its author, expressed himself to Hashem, so do we today, as Jews have throughout the millennia. These Psalms incorporate the character of Shimon integrated with Yehudah, creating a symbiosis of intensity and truth.

This is the significance of Shimon's blessing being concealed within the "Shema Hashem" of Yehudah's blessing. Hashem listens to Yehudah's pleas because of the hidden power of Shimon. Hashem does not listen to a prayer, regardless of its veracity, if there is no passion. Likewise, passion and emotion without integrity are worthless. An effective prayer must combine both: intensity and truth. Shema Hashem kol Yehudah: Shimon gave Yehudah's prayer the capacity to be listened to, as David Ha'melech composed the most effective prayers known to mankind.