

## Every man shall encamp by his banner with the sign of his father's house. (2:2)

*Chazal* teach that the arrangement of the Jews' encampment in the Wilderness paralleled the configuration of the Heavenly entourage that accompanied the *Shechinah* when it descended upon *Har Sinai* prior to the Giving of the Torah. Myriads of Heavenly Angels descended with Hashem, all grouped in composition under *Degelim*, banners. When *Klal Yisrael* saw this pattern, they, too, sought a sequence of *Degelim* for their encampment. It did not stop there. *Chazal* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 2:4) state that when *umos ha'olam*, the nations of the world, saw *Klal Yisrael* encamped under the *Degelim*, they approached the Jewish People and attempted to initiate a relationship with them. They said, "We too will grant you distinction, giving you positions of importance, power and monarchy. The Jewish response was straightforward, "You cannot give us anything that will in any way match the greatness of the *Degelim* which Hashem bestowed upon us." In summation, the gentiles attempted to disenfranchise us from Hashem, by enticing us with *kavod*, honor, prestige. Our response is quite simple: Whatever you tempt us with pales in comparison with the distinction Hashem accorded us with the *Degelim*.

What was notable about the *Degelim* that granted such extraordinary prestige to *Klal Yisrael*? What was it about the *Degelim* that made them feel so special? *Chazal* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 2:6) teach that the *Degelim* were a sign that *Klal Yisrael* represented the legion of Hashem. It elevated their image. They were Hashem's children, His hosts, His guard. The *Shechinah* reposed in the middle of the Camp, with all of the *Shevatim*, Tribes, encamped around it – each in its own pre-arranged place based upon its purpose and mission vis-à-vis the nation of Hashem. Yissachar symbolized and focused on Torah, Yehudah focused on the monarchy, while Reuven represented the attribute of *teshuvah*, repentance. Each of the tribes focused on its own Heavenly-designated mission; each was part of the large conglomerate of *Klal Yisrael*, who together were *mekadesh*, sanctified, the Name of Hashem.

What is the adhesive that bonds us together? The *Meshech Chochmah* (commentary to *Parashas Emor*) explains that the unified connection of *Klal Yisrael* that links us together as one people is unlike the relationship that the nations of the world have with one another. People of one country are linked to one another by virtue of the fact that they were born and raised in the same country and that they are culturally like-minded (for the most part). *Klal Yisrael* is bound together, its *hiskashrus* is its eternal bond with Hashem. This enduring relationship is ceaseless and constant, and it is what perpetuates us as a people.

Yaakov *Avinu* descended to Egypt with *shivim nefesh*, seventy souls (*Bereishis* 46:26). *Nefesh* is singular, because Yaakov's entire family was viewed as one unified soul. Eisav's family consisted of six *nefashos*, souls, in the plural (*Bereishis* 36:6), because they were all distant from one another, each with his own god, own religious philosophy, own way of life, own value system and goals. *Klal Yisrael* is focused collectively on Hashem – one G-d, one *hashkafah*, one *matarah*,

purpose and meaning in life.

This, explains *Horav Eliyahu Svei, zl*, is why we require the services of our *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah giants, who lead and guide us. Chazal (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 2:8) teach that when Hashem instituted the designated places for each tribe's encampment around the *Mishkan*, Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned lest the tribes dissent and challenge their assigned places. Hashem reassured him that each tribe "knew" its allotted place. They would follow the same configuration that was designated by the Patriarch Yaakov for his funeral. He had demonstrated to them how and where each one should stand around his bier. This taught them volumes concerning each one's ordained place. This is where he belonged; this is where he should encamp.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* gleans from here that in order to place everyone in his designated place, to show him clearly what is his mission, his purpose, how valuable and crucial he is to the success of an endeavor, how important his involvement is in its every aspect, one needs a father (figure). It was Yaakov *Avinu* who was *mei'acheid*, unified, *Klal Yisrael*, by showing each respective tribe where it should stand, where it belonged. This can only be performed by a father, because it is only to a father that one will listen and adhere.

This is the function of *manhigei Yisrael*, Torah leaders. They act as our "fathers." That is how they should feel toward us and how we should respond reciprocally to them.