



Shoshana Solomyak
Jerusalem Chapter
Director

The Story of Two Brothers

Throughout Sefer Bereishit Shimon and Levi often act as one unit. For example, in response to the story of Dina in Sechem where they devise a plan together to trick and destroy the entire city. Shimon and Levi were so much of a duo that Yaakov blessed them together at the end of his life, instead of giving them each an individual bracha like he did for the rest of the shevatim. Yaakov says:

“Simeon and Levi are brothers... Cursed be their wrath for it is mighty, and their anger because it is harsh.” (Genesis 49:5-7)

The harsh nature of this blessing is somewhat puzzling, as it sounds more like a curse than a blessing. However, what is significant for us at the moment is that Shimon and Levi were clearly united as brothers by their shared attribute of anger.

But as we come to this week’s Parsha, Pinchas, the brotherhood of Shimon and Levi begins to split. The Moabite and Midianite women seduce the Jewish men and allure them to partake in idol worship. Zimri, a man from the tribe of Shimon, engages in relations with a Midianite woman in front

of Moshe and all of Bnei Yisrael as an act of rebellion. Pinchas, from the tribe of Levi, zealously kills Zimri and the Midianite woman. While Shimon and Levi both acted with the same trait of anger, here is the first time that we see them come head to head, instead of acting together. The two brothers take their common trait in two completely different directions. Shimon (Zimri) uses his anger to rebel, while Levi (Pinchas) uses his anger to fight zealously for G-d.

While Shimon and Levi started off as “brothers”, united by a common personality, the different paths they ended up taking paves two very different futures. Shimon is never given a blessing by Moshe at the end of his life, but Levi is blessed with the role of being the religious leaders and teachers of all of Bnei Yisrael.

“And of Levi he said: “Your Tummim and Urim belong to Your pious man ... They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your Torah to Israel; they shall place incense before You, and burnt offerings upon Your altar.” (Deuteronomy 33: 8-11).

We learn from this week’s parsha that no trait is objectively good or bad, but that every trait has the potential to be used for good or for bad. May we all be zoche to recognize all of the unique traits that we were given and to direct each one of them to the service of G-d. Shabbat Shalom! ■