



Va'era

Who Are The Most Important People?

In Parshat Va'era, on the eve of the redemption of our people from Egypt, the Torah provides us with a genealogical account of the tribes of Israel - starting with Reuven the first born, and then Shimon, and then Levi. Then the Torah stops. The other nine tribes are left out. How can we understand this?

Rashi gives two great peirushim. In his first commentary, Rashi says that this entire passage comes to provide context for the birth and leadership of our two great leaders, Moshe and Aaron. Seeing as they came from the tribe of Levi, once we reach the tribe of Levi, that's where the Torah stops. If that is the case, I sense there's a weakness possibly in Rashi's peirush here. Because why then must the Torah tell us about Reuven and Shimon? It could just speak about Levi. And that's perhaps why Rashi himself offers a different peirush to us.

He says as follows: there are three tribes that people may expect to be left out, because they might think they're not important enough: Reuven and Shimon and Levi.

Why?

Their ancestors were criticised by Yaakov on his deathbed at the end of the Book of

Bereishit - because Reuven took one of his concubines and because of what Shimon and Levi did in the city of Shechem. So, we might think that these tribes are tainted, that they're not important enough.

Rashi says, "מפני שחויבים הם" because these three tribes are also important. That's why they are the ones to be listed. Let no one ever think that there are those within the people of Israel who are not important enough.

What is interesting is that the Hebrew word "חויב" "important" comes from the term "חشب" which means "to think" - indicating that importance is a figment of our imagination.

Throughout Tanach, the whole Bible, Hashem gives descriptive terms, adjectives to people: צדיק: righteous. רע: evil. טוב: good. On no single occasion does Hashem use the term "חויב" "important" for a person. That's a term that we use. Because in our mindset, often it's important to know who the important people are.

But let's never forget the teaching that comes from Rashi's second peirush: and that is that in truth, every single person is important.

Shabbat Shalom.