

Simeon and Levi are Brothers, Their Swords are Weapons of Violence

49: 5-7

DIG: In what way had Simeon and Levi been guilty of treachery? How did Simeon deal with his anger? How did Levi deal with his? What was their punishment? Why did one tribe decline into obscurity and the other ascend to prominence? How did ADONAI change the curse of one into a blessing? Are these tribes excluded in the millennial Kingdom? Why or why not? Who are the twelve gates in the millennial Jerusalem named after? What does this tell us about God's faithfulness?

REFLECT: How do you deal with your anger? Have you ever let your anger get the worst of you? What were the consequences of your actions? Did you change? Why or why not? Is there a place for righteous anger? If God can change the heart of Levi, what can He do for you or for someone you love? Who has a hold of the steering wheel of your life? Do you have any evidence of that? There are natural consequences for the decisions in our lives. What kind of spiritual crop are you producing?

Simeon and Levi are brothers - their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel. I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Isra'el (49:5-7).

The next two oldest sons were Simeon and Levi. As always, they were standing there side by side before Jacob. The name Simeon comes from the Hebrew word sh'ma, meaning *to hear, to listen, or to obey*. His name suggests that Ya'akov named him as a son who would *listen to ADONAI*, and perhaps more importantly, to *obey God*. So when we sing: Sh'ma Yisra'el, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad (hear O Isra'el, ADONAI is our God, ADONAI is one), it means *hear and obey*. In Judaism, you haven't really heard anything until you *act* on it. Actions speak louder than words. So here you have a son with the name Sh'ma built right into it. He was the one who was supposed to listen to God, but frankly, far too often Simeon acted as if he was deaf to His voice.

Levi means *joined or attached*. Like kindred spirits they were joined at the hip since they were young. They were the closest among the brothers, and that wasn't so good in this case. As Reuben had displayed instability and lust, these two brothers had displayed treachery

and cruelty. These hot heads had disgraced and endangered the whole family when **they** slaughtered the men of **Shechem** to defend the honor of their sister Dinah (**34:1-31**).⁷⁶⁶ There is hardly anything more terrible in life than treachery, especially when, as in the case of **Simeon** and **Levi**, it is cloaked in honor, doing evil in the name of good.

They were two full **brothers** and **sons** of Leah, but **they** were also full **brothers** in violence and **anger** (**49:5a**). **Simeon** was probably the ringleader when Joseph was sold into slavery. Earlier, when Yosef was testing his **brothers**, he thought **Simeon** needed the instruction of time in prison more than any of the other **brothers** and **he had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes** (**42:24**). That was no accident.

Jacob's **near historical prophecy** was that **their swords** would be **weapons of violence** and cruelty (**49:5b**). When the men of Judah needed help to fight the Canaanites, they asked for the help of **the Simeonites** (**Judges 1:3**). Later in **their** history, **the Simeonites** also slaughtered **the Amalekites who had escaped in the hill country of Seir** (**First Chronicles 4:42-43**). But **Simeon** and **Levi's** slaughter of the men of **Shechem** was not a holy war, as was the case with **Joshua**; it was a case of vengeance (see **Le - The Slaughter at Shechem by Simeon and Levi**).

We all deal with this issue of **anger** in one way or another. Some more than others. There is also such a thing as righteous **anger**. **The rabbis note that if it wasn't for anger, we wouldn't know love**. They are actually flip sides of the same emotion. There is no doubt that **God** is capable of being **angry** (**Exodus 4:14, 15:7, 32:10-12; Leviticus 26:28; Numbers 32:13; Second Kings 22:13**). **Yeshua** was **angry** with the money changers in the Temple when **He** first came into Yerushalayim (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Iu - Jesus Entered the Temple Area and Drove Out All Who Were Buying and Selling**). But the **Lord's anger** is righteous and proper, just like **ADONAI's** righteous protection of **His** wife **Isra'el** (see my commentary on **Exodus DI - You Shall Not Make For Yourselves an Idol**). But in contrast to this, **Simeon and Levi** took a ruthless and cruel revenge of the rape of **their** sister into their own hands. They let **their anger** get the worst of **them**.

*There is also a place for righteous **anger** in defense of **God** and **His** purposes on this earth in our lives. Unfortunately, many times we think our **anger** is righteous indignation for **the Lord** when it is really self-righteousness on our own behalf. When we are **angry** it is always righteous, but when other people are **angry**, they are of the devil. Truly pure, righteous **anger** from **God** is, in reality, seldom seen today. We may think we are justified in our **anger**, but I fear that much too often we err on the side of where **Simeon** was. We let it control us. We act out of **the flesh**, making the situation only worse. It was a terrible situation when Dina was raped, but **Simeon and Levi** made the situation much worse. The*

righteousness of ADONAI is seldom equated with our anger. Never seek revenge, my friends; instead, leave that to God's anger. For it is written in the TaNaKh, "ADONAI says, 'Vengeance is My responsibility - I will repay (Romans 12:19 CJB)."

As terrible as Shechem's son of Hamor the Hivite crime was (34:2), it seems that God did not want to slaughter him and all the men of the city. Jacob wanted nothing to do with them and he disassociates himself from their actions. With deep emotion, he said: **Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger (49:6a)**. Notice that Jacob never condemns Simeon and Levi as people or disowns them as his sons. But basically, he was saying, "I didn't bring you up to act like this!" Like Jacob, we need to love the sinner, but hate the sin.

*This is another trap in life. This self-willed attitude says, "I am going to do it as I please. I take hold of the steering wheel of my own life - nobody is going to tell me what to do!" And if we shut God out of the decision making process in our lives we're in trouble because **pride goes before destruction, and [arrogance] before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)**. Isn't self-will the worst form of pride? There are those who are not seeking a personal relationship with Jesus, but at the same time, do not consider themselves hostile to God. We all know people like this. They are not terrible, but they don't have time for **the LORD** - no time to hear Him. In reality this is merely a veiled form of self-will - going about life in our own way and trying to shut ADONAI out of the picture. But Messiah won't let us sit on a theological fence. He declares to us today: **Whoever is not with Me is against Me (Matthew 12:30a)**. Even as believers, we are not immune to this self-willed attitude.*

After the slaughter at Shechem, Simeon and Levi hamstringed oxen as they pleased (49:6b). After the attack they had seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields (34:28). To hamstring oxen means to cut the tendons in their legs so that they can no longer work. The oxen that they didn't take - they hamstringed, making them useless and helpless. All the men of Shechem were slaughtered and their wives and children were taken as spoil. So there was no one left to tend these oxen. This was merely an act of cruelty, which, of course, was their nature.

Then Ya'akov, speaking on God's behalf, says to them: **Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel (49:7a)**! Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us that there are six things ADONAI hates, seven things that are detestable to Him. The first is haughty eyes, reflecting a proud heart, the second is a lying tongue, the third is hands that shed innocent blood, the fourth is a heart that devises wicked schemes, the fifth is feet that are quick to rush into evil, sixth is a false witness who pours out lies, and the seventh is a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. It seems like Simeon and Levi did all seven

of these when **they** lied to **the men of Shechem** before **they** slaughtered **them**. No wonder **the LORD** hated what **they** did and found **their** actions **detestable**.

Simeon and Levi had joined together to commit **their** crime at **Shechem**, and as a punishment, **they** would be scattered among the tribes of **Isra'el**. **Ya'akov** prophesied: **I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel (49:7b)**, never to receive **their** own territory during the dispensation of the Torah (**Exodus 19:1 to Acts 1:26**). Thus, **they** would be denied one of the major covenant blessings promised by **God (15:18-20)**. Inseparable growing up, **they** brought out the worst in each other. So, for **their** own good **they** would be separated.

Simeon and his descendants turned out to be the smallest of all the tribes and is omitted from the tribal blessings of **Moses** in **Deuteronomy 33**. In **Numbers 1:22-23** we learn that after **the Israelites** had received the Torah at the base of Mount Sinai there were **59,300 men from the tribe of Simeon over twenty years old**. But several decades later we learn that **the descendants of Simeon** had shrunk to **22,200 men over twenty years old (Numbers 26:12-14)**. Do the math - you might call that a judgment! Just before this second census, **Moabite women committed sexual immorality** with the **Israelite men** and convinced **them** to offer **sacrifices to the Baal of Peor** leading to idolatry (**Numbers 25:1-3**). As a result, the Torah tells us that **24,000 Israelites died in a plague (Numbers 25:9)**. **The rabbis teach that these were all from the tribe of Simeon**. Obviously, we don't know that, but it's interesting that the rabbis allude to it.

After the conquest of Canaan by **Joshua**, **the Simeonites** scattered, settling in the southern part of **Judah's** territory (**Joshua 19:1-9; Judges 1:3**). Consequently, **they** lost much of **their** own identity and little was heard about **them** after the days of King **Asa**. So **Jacob** says that because of **Simeon's and Levi's anger** and attitude of self-will, choosing to do as **they** pleased, **they** would be **scattered**.

In contrast to the idolatry of **the Simeonites**, the **Levites** sided with **Moses** over the sin of the golden calf at Mount Sinai. But even then **they** used **their swords as weapons of violence** in slaughtering **about three thousand** that day (see my commentary on **Exodus Gv - And All the Levites Rallied to Moses**). So in keeping with **Jacob's** curse, **the Levites** did not receive **their** own territory, but scattered in forty-eight **Levitical** cities throughout **Isra'el** when **they** came into the Land (**Numbers 18:20-24, 35:1-8; Deuteronomy 10:8-9; Joshua 14:4, 24:1-42**).

In the final analysis, the Levites had a change of heart and developed a zeal for the LORD, while the Simeonites continued their passion for violence and cruelty. Thus, the Simeonites started to decline into obscurity while the Levites ascended to the prominence of the priestly tribe, and they would be the custodians of the Tabernacle and the priesthood (see my commentary on **Exodus Ge - The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons**). Moses, as God's prophet, declared: **In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites and the Levites will be Mine . . . I have taken them as My own in place of the first born, the first male offering from every Israelite woman. (Numbers 8:14-17; Deuteronomy 18:2).** After the plague of the first born in Egypt, the first born male of each family was to be a priest (see my commentary on **Exodus Cd - Consecrate To Me Every Firstborn Male**).

But now ADONAI says that because of their faithfulness in the golden calf incident, the entire tribe of Levi will be the priests for the nation representing ADONAI to His people and His people to ADONAI. **And I have taken the Levites in place of the first born sons of Isra'el. From among all the Israelite, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the [Tabernacle] on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them (Numbers 8:18-19).** Therefore, we see an example of the marvelous grace of God in Levi. While it is true that his descendants were scattered throughout Isra'el, but it became a blessing in disguise because they became a tribe of priests led by Aaron, the brother of Moses.⁷⁶⁷

This is the opportunity Yeshua offers each of us today. To often we may choose to be like Simeon and Levi. In our modern terminology, people say, "I've got challenging issues in my life." Back in the old days, people merely said, "I have sinned." But no matter what you call it, we've got the same choice. Are we going to deal with things in our own way, with our own anger, or will we have a change of heart, a change of direction? Without minimizing our sin, anger, depression, or whatever it is . . . ADONAI brings us good news (Isaiah 40:9)! We must understand that the world has no answers to our problems. It's kind of like spiritual agriculture for dummies. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. People reap what they sow. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7). This concept is so simple - yet profound.

In the **far eschatological future** both Simeon and Levi will receive territory in the messianic Kingdom. By the grace of God, Simeon will have one portion; it will border the territory of Benjamin from east to west (Ezekiel 48:24). Not only that, but John was carried away in the Spirit to the top of a great, high mountain and saw the Holy City, Millennial Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven. It had the Shechinah glory of God, so

that its brilliance was like that of a priceless jewel, like a crystal-clear diamond. It had a great high wall with twelve gates; at the gates were twelve angels; and inscribed on the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:10-12). These are the same gates seen in **Ezeki'el 48:31-34**.

There were three gates to the east, three gates to the north, three gates to the south and three gates to the west (Revelation 21:13). And on the south side, will be the gate of **Simeon**. Those who believe in "Replacement Theology" (the belief that all of **ADONAI's** promises to **Isra'el** have been forfeited by her national rejection of **Christ** and given to the Church), have a tough time with these verses. **The twelve gates** will not be named for the twelve apostles. No gate will be called **Matthew**, or **Mark** or **Luke** or **John**. But there will be a gate named after **Simeon (Ezeki'el 48:33c)**, and there will be a gate named after **Levi (Ezeki'el 48:31c)**. For all eternity **the twelve tribes of Isra'el** will be remembered. When the *Gentile* nations enter into the millennial Jerusalem, they will pass through **gates** named after the sons of **Isra'el**.

And alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites will have an allotment 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. Its total length will be 25,000 cubits and its width 10,000 cubits. They must not sell or exchange any of it. This is the best of the land and must not pass into other hands, because it is holy to the LORD (Ezeki'el 49:13-14).

It is also the grace of **God** that has transformed sinners like you and me into a kingdom of priests. *All believers are priests today*. Among them are converted drunkards, prostitutes and murderers. How did **they** become priests in the kingdom of **God**? Just as we all did - by the marvelous grace of **God**. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of **Christ**, a lamb without blemish or defect (First Peter 1:18-19). Then **Kefa** goes on to say: You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to **God** through **Jesus Christ** (First Peter 2:5). Who is he talking about? Those who have been redeemed by the precious **blood of Christ**!

Reuben lost first place, and then **Simeon** and **Levi** also lost first place. **The Messiah** would not come from any of those tribes. There was also another brother who was a sinner. Let's see what the grace of **God** would do for **him**.⁷⁶⁸