

## Parsha Pinchas, talk by Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger

Shabbos, 9 Tammuz, 5783 (July 8, 2023)

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger, grandson of Rabbi George Schlesinger, shared Divrei Torah at Young Israel of Memphis, during Seudah Shlisit on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, 5783 (July 8, 2023). The focus of the talk was a comparison of Levites vs Semonites. The Divrei Torah was given in honor and memory of his grandfather on the occasion of his 10<sup>th</sup> yahrzeit.

The Rabbi spoke about how the Levites are the people who are most against, and will not tolerate acts that disrespect God's name. For example in the weekly parsha, it is Pinchas, who is a Levite, that pierces Zimri, who is a Simeonite. Zimri was punished for allowing himself to be seduced into having relations with a woman from a foreign tribe.

Although in the Parsha the Levites seem to be a more Godly tribe than the Simeonites, there are times in history the Levites are "partners in crime" with the Simeonites. There is the role Levy and his brother Simeon played in getting Joseph sold into slavery. And there is the story involving the sister of Levy and Simeone, Dinah and the tricking of the Shechem into circumcision. Levi and Simeon were acting together against the Shechem.

Rabbi Efroni Schlesinger pointed out that although Levi and Simeon did a lot of things together, there was always fundamental differences between them. The Rabbi spoke about how the main difference between them was in their character. The Levites were much better at practicing Rambam's principle of moderation and balance between 2 sides, and not being extreme in one way or another. The Semonites, on the other hand, were extreme all the time.

The Rabbi pointed out that although both brothers played a role in selling off Joseph into slavery, only Simeon was held hostage and not Levi. This indicates that Joseph knew that Levi's participation was different.

The Rabbi pointed out that it is also noteworthy that all the high priests and leaders of our nation come from the tribe of Levite, and not from the tribe of Simeon or any other tribe. This includes our leader Moses and new leader Joshua, that are in the Parsha, as well as the Kohanim.