

Tribal Wisdom, Humility, Courage and Wealth (Bamidbar)

History is not everything, but it is a starting point. History is a clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of day. It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It tells them where they are but, more importantly, what they must be. -John Henrik Clarke

During our desert wandering, the twelve tribes were grouped into four divisions when they camped around the tabernacle. Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the Kli Yakar (1550-1619), on Numbers 2:3, explains that beyond the logistics and tribal hierarchy involved in the placement, there was a deeper meaning. He states that the tribes were each camped in a different direction for a reason. Each point of the compass represents different traits and the order in which man should acquire those traits in his journey through life. He bases his formula on the Talmud and Maimonides.

The first division, on the eastern front, under the leadership of the tribe of Judah, included the tribes of Yissachar and Zevulun. Together they represent the attribute of Wisdom that according to the Kli Yakar is the first step and the foundation of growth and development.

The second division, on the southern front, under the leadership of the tribe of Reuven, included the tribes of Simeon and Gad. They represent the attribute of Humility. This is the second step for any type of true growth.

The third division, on the western front, under the leadership of the tribe of Ephraim, included the tribes of Menashe and Benjamin. They represent the attribute of Courage. This is a requirement for success.

The fourth and final division, on the northern front, under the leadership of the tribe of Dan, included the tribes of Asher and Naftali. They represent the attribute of Wealth. Wealth allows a person to bring all the other traits to full fruition.

The Kli Yakar quotes the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Shabbat 92a) stating: "The Divine Presence only dwells upon one who is wise, wealthy, courageous and humble."

When the four divisions, each with their own traits and strengths are united by the common and central service of God – that is when we approach the ideal.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To Jerusalem Day, the celebration for the victory of the Six-Day War, the reunification of Jerusalem and the return of much ancestral land back to the Jewish people.