<https://www.dropbox.com/s/aqw3s6xrf5jerru/parshas%20bechukosai%20brit%20shevatim.docx?dl=0>

In Parshas Bechukosi, we read the Tochacha. But at the end of the Tochacha, there are words of comfort and Nechama. “I will remember the covenant of Yakov, and even Yitzchok, and even the covenant of Avrohom I will remember; and I will remember the land.” A few Pesukim later the Torah says, “I will remember the Bris of the Rishonim whom I took out of Egypt in front of the nations to be there God, I am HaShem.” Rashi explains that in addition to the Bris of the Avos, the Bris of the Rishonim is the covenant with the Shevatim. What is this, and what does it represent?

There are also two Gemarras that connect to this idea and require clarification. One is the Gemarra in Bava Basra that says there is a tradition that no Shevet will be destroyed. The other is that in counting the interrelated covenants that the Jews accepted upon themselves as they entered Eretz Yisroel, one opinion counts an extra twelve which is the interrelated Bris among the Shevatim. What is this Bris?

In order to begin to understand this, the concept of Shevatim needs to be understood. Klal Yisroel is built on three levels. There are the Avos, then the Shevatim, then the descendants of the Shevatim. We see this in the first Bracha of Shemoneh Esreh, the Bracha of Avos. We first approach HaShem as the God of the Avos. We then say, “Who brings Geulah to the children of the children.” The children are the Shevatim. Their children are all the rest of Klal Yisroel. The avos are the Merkavah. We cannot approach them. But we receive the influence of the Avos through the Shevatim.

The Shem Mishmuel explains this concept in the following way. There is a Mitzvah that one cannot make a Matzeva. That is a single stone to be sued as a Mizbeach. Rashi says that even though we find that the Avos did bring Korbanos on a Matzevah, it is detested in the times of their descendants. The Shem Mishmuel explains that a Matzevah represents the ability to be a complete unity that serves HaShem in all facets. Only the Avos could do that. They were individuals that were the entire Klal Yisroel. That is why Yakov could say, “I lived with Lavan, but I kept all six hundred and thirteen Mitzvoth.” The Shevatim begin the division of the service of HaShem into specific areas. No one person can keep all the Mitzvoth. Thus only the Avos can use a single stone as a Mizbeach; we need to acknowledge the diversity of Avodah that each Shevet represents.

Yakov is aware of this, and therefore gives each Shevet a unique Bracha. This is a preparation for their journey through history, and the tools and characteristics they need for that journey. The repetition of their names at the beginning of Shemos, is emphasize this point. We have ended Sefer Bereishis, the book of the Avos; we are now entering the realm of the Shevatim.

Since the Galus begins with the Shevatim, our Pasuk here says that just as I remembered the Shevatim and took Klal Yisroel out of Egypt, the same will be true of the Geulah that is referred to here in Bechukosai. In the Geulah of Mitzrayim, we even took with us the coffins of the Shevatim. The Geulah was actually with the Shevatim.

That is why in this Pasuk they are called Rishonim, and not Echad. They are the first but not the unity. The Avos are a unity, but the Shevatim are only the first generation. They begin a new process. The Shevatim are called the first generation. They are the beginning of the Jewish people.

On another level, the twelve Shevatim are what is called the twelve boundaries of the world. A cube has a twelve boundaries. Those are the parameters within which the world exists. The Shevatim are those paramaters for Klal Yisroel. Another way of defining this, is the twelve MAzalot of the months. The concept of Mazal is the conduit by which HaShem’s good descends to the world. The Shevatim each provide us with one aspect of the needs of the world. These are represented in the various Brachos they receive. This is also represented on the Shulchan. It is the source of sustenance for Klal Yisroel, and it comes through the twelve Lechem HaPanim, one for each Shevet.

As we quoted, the Gemarra in Bava Basra teaches that there is a tradition that no Shevet will be destroyed. It would seem that this a result of the Bris. As the Ramban writes, the word Bris is from the root Briah-creation. It is something that cannot be overturned. What needs clarification is how can that be, when ten Shevatim go into exile and seem to disappear?

The Brisker Rav deals with this question. He says that this Bris has a unique component that is connected to the Pasuk before. “Even though we are in the lands of our enemies, HaShem will not be disgusted with us.” He posits that since a Shevet cannot be destroyed, HaShem will arrange that even in the lands of our enemies, people who think they are intermarrying are actually going to marry other also unknown Jews. Thus when Eliyahu comes, he will reveal these hidden Jews and show their lineage that it is an unbroken chain that connects them to their Shevet. Thus this Bris will remain.

The interrelated Bris, is since Yakov Avinu at the end of his Brachos to the Shevatim gives each Shevet all the Brachos, their Bris becomes interrelated.

In this sense we have another level of Bris that connects us to a unique aspect of Klal Yisroel, not only as general Jews, but as part of a Shevet. May we be Zoche to the revelation of Eliyahu who will connect us to our Shevet.