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Dedicated L'IluY Nishmas HaChaver  
Shlomo Michael ben Meir z'l

## Many Chapters

**R**av Yitzchok Zilberstein, shlit'a, Rav of Ramat Elchanan, is a celebrated *gadol baTorah* and a poseik at Mayanei Hayeshua Hospital in Bnei Brak. Rav Zilberstein is the author of dozens of popular *sefarim*, among them *Aleinu Leshabeach* and *V'ehaarevna Na* on contemporary halachic challenges and scenarios he has encountered.

While at a *sheva brachos* for the son of a renowned talmid chacham in Bnei Brak, Rav Zilberstein heard the following *ma'aseh* from the *ba'al simchah* about a dramatic day in Europe, before the War.

There was a cheder student who struggled to maintain the behavioral standards expected by the school. He was known to be wild and unfazed by disciplinary actions, making his *rabbeim* crazy whenever he would get into trouble. One day, the *melamed* heard a strange bleating sound coming from the shul adjacent to the cheder. When he went to see what was going on, to his great shock, a goat jumped

out of the *aron kodesh*. When the *melamed* returned to class, all eyes were on the usual culprit. The *menahel* soon arrived, and the boy admitted to the prank, but the *menahel* decided this was the final straw and announced that he would be expelled from cheder.

Frowning and standing as tall as he could before the *menahel*, the child retorted, "With respect due to the *Rov*, the *Menahel*, I will not leave the cheder. And... please know that I hereby summon you to the Beis Din!" All were stunned to silence while the young boy strode out the door and down the street to the Beis Din, where he begged the secretary for an audience. Bewildered, the *menahel* and *melamed* followed behind.

When the door to the Beis Din opened to the unlikely crew, the boy stepped forward and confessed, "Your Honor, I understand that what I did was wrong, and *I* deserve to be punished. But kicking me out of *yeshivah* will not only affect the rest of *my* life, it will also affect my future offspring... Did the *menahel* consult with them? Did he take their lives and spiritual well being into account?"

The *menahel* and *Av Beis Din* stared at each other in surprise for a full minute. While he may have been a trouble-maker, the boy was clearly very sharp! Needless to say, he was given another chance, and he

soon settled down in cheder. In fact, from that day on, he began to focus his unconventional intensity and lack of inhibition upon his Torah study — and excelled above many.

“And I...” paused the *ba'al simchah* with emotion, “I am the great-grandson of that trouble maker!”



Almost forty years after the initial counting of Am Yisrael in the Desert, everyone from the *Dor haMidbar* has passed away. A new generation has grown up and is ready to enter Eretz Yisrael in their stead. In the wake of the *mageifah*, the horrific plague which Pinchas has ended, Hashem now instructs Moshe and Elazar to conduct another census and engage in *chalukas ha-Aretz*, to divide and assign regions of the Holy Land as tribal inheritances:

אך בְּגוֹרָל יִחַלֵּק אֶת־הָאָרֶץ...עַל־פִּי הַגּוֹרָל תִּחַלֵּק נַחֲלֹתוֹ בֵּין רֶב לַקָּטָן:

“The land, moreover, is to be apportioned by lot... Each portion shall be assigned by lot, whether for larger or smaller groups.... The inheritance shall be apportioned between the numerous and the few, according to lot....” (26:56)

Instead of allowing power, influence or coalition politics to determine where each *Shevet* would go, Rashi explains the Torah’s intent in making it הַגּוֹרָל, according to a lottery system: שַׁנְתַּחֲלֵק בְּרוּחַ הַקּוֹדֵשׁ, “The Land was divided by means of the Divine Spirit.” Similarly, when Yehoshua leads the nation into Eretz Yisrael, it is על פי ה' נתנו לו, “in accordance with Hashem’s



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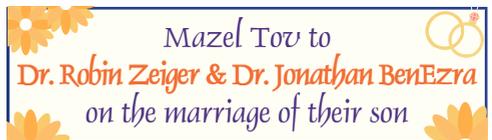


word.” (*Yehoshua*, 19:50)

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz (*Imros Kodesh*, Pinchas) adds that the portions of Eretz Yisrael were assigned according to unique spiritual character traits that matched the qualities of the geography. Each location corresponded to the *shoresh ha-neshama*, the spiritual root of each tribe. Only the Ribbono shel Olam, in His infinite wisdom, knows the true hidden potentials and abilities of each tribe. Only Hashem knew the strengths and talents hidden beneath the occasional appearance of ‘trouble-making’. Identifying the deeper spiritual stature of each tribal founder and their offspring needed to be accomplished through *Ruach haKodesh*.

Our sedra describes the first *Shevet* to receive their inheritance: “Reuven, *b’chor Yisrael*, Israel’s firstborn: the descendants of Reuven were the *Chanochi* family (הַחֹנִי) from *Chanoch*; the *Palu’i* family (הַפְּלִי), descendants of *Palu...*” (26:5)

Rashi notes the spelling of the family names in this verse, and offers that it is in response to the nations who had cast aspersions on their lineages. Our enemies had attempted to denigrate them, saying, “How can they trace their lineage by their tribes? Do they really think that the Egyptians did not exploit their mothers? If [the Egyptians] mastered the bodies [of the Hebrews], all the more so [did they exercise authority over] their wives.” For this



reason, proclaims Rashi, the Ribbono Shel Olam appended His Name to the names of these families, adding the letter ה to one side and the letter י to the other side (הַחֲנֹכִי and הַפְּלֵאִי). This was as if to say, 'I bear witness that these are the sons of their fathers!'

In relation to the Tribes, David haMelech too refers to Hashem as a testifying 'Witness': ששם עלו שבטים שבטי י-ה, עדות לישראל, "There ascended the tribes, the tribes of God (י-ה), testimony to Israel" (*Tehilim*, 122:4). Hashem's Name (י-ה) is again testifying for them; whatever question may be raised regarding the holiness and purity of our identity, God Himself vouches for us. It is for this reason, throughout the text, that the names of the families begin with a ה and end with a י.

As we recognize the Creator's willingness to testify on our behalf, to stand up for us 'in court' and to proclaim his belief in us, how can we not become deeply patient, humble and kind in the way we see and judge others? Each of us lives out a story consisting of many chapters. Only Hashem knows how many chapters there will be and how the narrative will unfold. May there always be a sweet and happy ending, with revealed good in store for us all!

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"The grandchildren of Haman learned Torah in Bnei Brak..." (*Gittin*, 57b) ■

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