



Menashe's Mention

Am Yisrael's forty-year sojourn in the desert is coming to an end and they are preparing to enter the Land of Israel. The tribes of Reuven and Gad approach Moshe Rabbeinu and request to remain where they are, east of the Jordan River, to settle the territory as their inheritance. Moshe Rabbeinu reacts strongly yet acquiesces, after the Reuvenites and the Gadites promise to lead the rest of the tribes in the conquest of Eretz Yisrael.

What is most fascinating is that the Torah then tells us that two families from the tribe of Menashe joined them, 'splitting off' from the rest of their tribe to also inherit land on this side of the Jordan. What prompted these families to do such a thing? It is clear from the text that the tribes of Reuven and Gad had a lot of cattle which motivated them to seek a more expansive space to settle, but we don't hear that that was necessarily the case with Menashe's people. What is the back story here?

On the simple, textual level, the *Ramban* *zt'l* posits that this suggestion was initiated by the tribes of Reuven and Gad. Being granted a very large portion, they invited any of the tribes to join them. Two families from Menashe did indeed join them, perhaps since they also had a lot of cattle.

Clearly, though, it is not incidental that the tribe of Menashe accepted their offer. As we know, every event and detail in our world is meticulously orchestrated by Hashem. *Midrash Lekach Tov* views this tribal split as a punishment to the tribe of Menashe.


It was Menashe, son of Yosef Hatzadik, who managed Yosef's household, and it was he who ran after the brothers, accusing them of stealing Yosef's goblet. As a result, the brothers tore their garments in mourning once the goblet was found in Binyamin's sack. Since Menashe caused their garments to be torn, measure for measure, his tribe was torn in two. How exacting is Hashem's judgement and how careful we must be to avoid causing pain to another! Every act we do has consequences, whether we will see it or not; nothing in this world goes unnoticed or uncalculated.

A more positive perspective is offered by the *Netziv* *zt'l* who suggests that Moshe Rabbeinu himself convinced members of the tribe of Menashe to remain in Transjordan. Menashe's tribe was known for its scholars and erudition. Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned that Torah learning would be weak in this far territory and therefore invited Menashe to boost the spiritual level of the area. Clearly, when choosing a place to settle, we must be careful to ensure that there is a strong Torah infrastructure to which we can connect and thrive spiritually.

Sha'arei Aharon shares yet another

perspective. The tribe of Yosef represents the totality of the nation; *Klal Yisrael* is called his descendants (*Amos* 5:6). Therefore, he, through his son Menashe, was chosen to dwell on both sides of the Jordan to safeguard the feeling of oneness and brotherhood among all the tribes.

It is during this time period of the Three Weeks that we can concentrate our energy to inculcate these very lessons into our lives. How careful we must be not to hurt others, not to create divisiveness; rather focus on unity and brotherhood. It is also an imperative to strengthen our Torah foundation and build upon it in a focused and purposeful way. Through our efforts, may we merit to see the rebuilding of Tzion and Yerushalayim with kinship and solidarity among our people, Amen. ■



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