

So Moshe gave to them – to Bnei Gad, and Bnei Reuven, and half the tribe of Menashe ben Yosef – the Kingdom of Sichon... And the Kingdom of Og. (32:33)

The lands which were inhabited by the kingdoms of Sichon and Og were very fertile. *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* were two tribes which had large herds of sheep and cattle. The fertile grazing land would be a boon for them. They, therefore, approached Moshe *Rabbeinu* and requested to lay claim to the eastern portion of the Jordan, *Eivar ha'Yardein*, for themselves and their families. They were granted their wish, and the two tribes, with the added complement of half the tribe of Menashe, were allowed to remain on *Eivar ha'Yardein*. The question is obvious: Where did the tribe of Menashe enter into the picture? The discussion was about Reuven and Gad – not Menashe. The **Netziv, zl**, explains that Moshe was concerned for the spiritual health of the two tribes who remained separated from the rest of the nation. Their involvement in agricultural commerce would certainly occupy much of their time, hence not allow for the necessary exposure to spirituality which is required to maintain a spiritual status quo. The members of the tribe of Menashe, who were strongly committed *bnei Torah*, would inspire their brethren. This teaches us the significance of maintaining one's residence in a Torah-friendly community, one which is replete with individuals who devote themselves-- and inspire others-- to maintain a strong relationship with the Torah.

We wonder why *Shevet Menashe*, which had among its ranks some profound Torah scholars, was selected to be the tribe that remained on *Eivar ha'Yardein*-- and not *Shevet Yissachar*, whose vocation it was to study and disseminate Torah. **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**, cites *Chazal* who teach that because the *Shevatim*, tribes/brothers, caused Yaakov *Avinu* to rend his garment in mourning over the news that Yosef had been killed, they, too, were compelled to tear their garments when they were accused of stealing Yosef's goblet. Two hundred and fifty years later, the tribes were separated and one tribe was "torn" in half – *Shevet Menashe*. Why? *Chazal* inform us that the messenger that Yosef sent to search for his goblet in the brothers' grain sacks was none other than Menashe. Thus, the one who indirectly caused the brothers to rend their garments was Menashe. Thus, two and a half centuries later, his tribe was split – half on the western bank of the Jordan and half on the eastern bank.

We have no understanding of G-d's ways, because we are limited by the temporal nature of time. Our tenure in this world is temporary and filled with questions – questions that are answered decades and even centuries later. Our inability to connect the dots, to put everything into perspective, hampers us from seeing life in its true perspective. No one is ignored. Everyone receives his due – both positive and negative. It might take time, but it will invariably occur –often when we least expect, or understand, it.

The **Chafetz Chaim** would cite two unrelated episodes which demonstrate this idea. There will always be a payback. It might take some time, and it might arrive when one least expects it, but it is guaranteed to come.

The first story concerns a poor widow who lived in Radin. It was winter, and she had run out of rent money. She begged the landlord not to evict her in the cold of winter. Could he please wait for the spring when the weather was not as harsh? The man was obstinate. She would have to go. He was embarrassed to leave her belongings in the street. Instead, he removed the windows from the apartment, exposing the woman to the elements, thereby forcing her to seek shelter elsewhere. The poor widow went into the street, shocked by the man's cruel insensitivity, broken and weeping bitterly over her own miserable plight.

When word concerning the incident reached the *Chafetz Chaim*, he commented, "Such an episode evokes Heavenly anger. It will not go by unrequited."

Years passed, in fact sixty-seven years went by, during which the landlord lived a very good, peaceful life. He was healthy and prosperous, not a care in the world. Everyone had forgotten about that terrible incident – everyone but Hashem. One day, the landlord went for a walk and was bitten by a rabid dog. He became ill with rabies, and suffered greatly until his painful death. Everyone took pity on him; everyone felt his pain. The only one who remembered what had taken place sixty-seven years earlier was the *Chafetz Chaim*. He noted, "One must have a Torah perspective on life and view everything that occurs through the prism of Torah." Everything that takes place is part of one long continuum. What seems shocking to us today might not be so earth shattering if we would know the "rest of the story."

Another incident occurred in Aishishuk, during the Cantonist decree, when young Jewish youths were forcibly grabbed and conscripted for a minimum of twenty-five years into the Czar's army. Word reached the leaders of the Jewish community that they would have to supply a certain number of young men for the army. There was no room for negotiation. If the community did not supply them willingly, the boys would be taken by force, and everyone would pay. The soldiers went around indiscriminately picking up Jewish boys. Among those was the son of the town's butcher – a burly man who would stop at nothing to achieve his objectives.

When the butcher heard that his son had been taken, he went into a frenzy. He went to the barracks where the boys were being held captive. The wailing that he heard was heart rending. He proceeded to the commanding officer and asked, "How much do you want so that my son may leave? Name your price and you will have it." The officer looked at the hysterical father and said, "You do not seem to understand. There is a certain number of boys which I must provide for the army. If that number is missing – no amount of money can make up for the loss." The officer was intimating that he really did not care who took the butcher's son's place, but someone – not money – must replace the boy.

The butcher performed a dastardly sin. Late at night, he entered the *bais hamedrash* and found one boy who was a *masmid*, diligent student, studying alone in the back of the study hall. The butcher snuck up on him, grabbed him and brought him to the army barracks, together with a gift of one hundred rubles for the officer – all of this in lieu of the butcher's son. The son went free,

replaced by the poor *yeshivah* student.

The *Chafetz Chaim* was studying in Aishishuk at the time and became aware of the tragic incident. The entire community was in an uproar. How could the butcher get away with committing such an outrageously cruel act? Time, however, was on the butcher's side, as people began to forget. Soon, he was "yesterday's" tragedy, yesterday's news. The *Chafetz Chaim*, however, did not forget. He patiently waited to see how Hashem would deal with the butcher's requital.

The butcher took his son into the business, and he soon became his father's right hand man. One day, the butcher gave his son a bag of money with which to purchase calves from a nearby town. The road to this town took the son through an area notorious for various insects – many of which carried dangerous germs. The son was bitten by a mosquito carrying the deadly black plague. As the trip went on, the son became more and more ill. He purchased the calves and proceeded to return home. By the time he entered the city limits of Aishishuk, his entire body was covered with painful black blisters which were already oozing blood. Finally, unable to continue on, the young man died a painful, gruesome death in the middle of the street.

The *Chevra Kaddisha*, Burial Society, was summoned, but when they saw the condition of the deceased, they said, "We are unable to come in contact with the corpse. It would make us susceptible to the vicious infection which killed him. The butcher was called and told that his son was lying dead in the street, with no one even to move him. The father was relegated to performing the gruesome ritual all by himself, as he picked up the corpse, prepared the grave and personally buried his son. The entire town felt the pain of the father who so tragically lost his son. The *Chafetz Chaim*, however, remembered. Hashem had not forgotten what the butcher had done to the poor *yeshivah bachur*. It was payback time.