

Efraim and Menashe shall be mine like Reuven and Shimon... but progeny born to you after them shall be yours; they will be included under the name of the brothers with regard to their inheritance. (48:5,6)

According to *Rashi*, Efraim and Menashe are considered among the total of the other sons, thus receiving an equal portion in *Eretz Yisrael* in the same manner as their counterparts among the actual sons of Yaakov *Avinu*. In the *Talmud Bava Basra* 121b, *Chazal* debate whether the new status of *Shevet*, Tribe, accorded to Efraim and Menashe had any bearing on the amount of land they received in *Eretz Yisrael*. *Rashi* and *Ramban* continue this debate. *Rashi* is of the opinion that, while *Eretz Yisrael* would be divided into twelve parts, these portions would not be equal in size. The size of a tribe's population determined the amount of land it received. Therefore, Yosef's sons, Efraim and Menashe, received the same amount of land, regardless of their individual tribal status. Accordingly, Yosef's sons received their father's portion in the land, and then it was divided.

Ramban disputes this, claiming that it impugns the integrity of Yosef, a *b'chor*, firstborn. As such, he should have received a double portion in the land. Therefore, he feels that all twelve tribes received equal parts. Consequently, large and small tribes each received the same amount of land. Actually, the individual member of each tribe received less if he belonged to a large tribe than the individual member who hailed from a smaller tribe. Efraim and Menashe individually received an equal portion of *Eretz Yisrael*, the same size as that of the other tribes. Thus, Yosef did receive a double portion.

It would seem from *Rashi's* view that the status of Efraim and Menashe as tribes was more honorary than actual tribal status. *Ramban* points this out, citing it as the reason that he disagrees with *Rashi*. **Horav Arye Leib Heyman, zl**, suggests that *Rashi* is also in agreement with the idea that Yaakov's designation changed the status of Efraim and Menashe, but it was much more than honorary. It was a transformation of their essence. He notes the syntax of the *pesukim* in support of his thesis.

The Torah begins, "Efraim and Menashe shall be like Reuven and Shimon." This is followed in the next *pasuk* with a sort of interruption, relating that Rachel *Imeinu* had died in "Canaan on the road." In the very next *pasuk*, Yaakov notices Yosef's sons and asks, "Who are these?" *Rashi* explains that Yaakov wanted to bless them, but the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence of G-d, had departed from him. This was due to the wicked progeny that would descend from them: Yaravam and Achav would descend from Efraim; Yeihu and his sons would descend from Menashe. This awareness provoked Yaakov to ask: "Who are these/from where did these who are unfit for blessing emerge?" The question is obvious: Why did Yaakov suddenly become aware of Efraim and Menashe's future offspring? Did his vision change once he had granted them tribal status?

Rav Heyman explains that, indeed, it did. Blessing is to be defined as adding something, an increase, augmentation concerning the subject of the blessing. Yaakov granted Efraim and Menashe tribal status, which sparked a spiritual transformation within them. They were no longer simple people; they had become members of the *Shivtei Kah*, which was an entirely new designation. As Yaakov was about to bless them, thus concretizing their newly formed position, he observed that their exemplary status would catalyze the birth of such wicked people as Yaravam, Achav and Yeihu.

Yaakov was acutely aware that, with greatness, comes greater challenge. "He who is greater than his fellow, his *yetzer*, inclination, is likewise greater." As one's spiritual persona develops and grows, so, too, does the evil-inclination that must now work harder to bring him down. One must strive for a balance. With tribal status, Efraim and Menashe became exposed to an entirely novel series of challenges. Their wicked progeny was not necessarily a direct consequence, but rather, the result of greater challenge.

Yaakov *Avinu* elevated his grandsons, not only in name alone, but also in essence. He created two entirely new individuals who now had tribal status. Rav Heyman supports this idea with an anomaly in the flow of the text in *Parashas Shelach*, which records Moshe's selection of the *meraglim*, spies. In mentioning the tribe of Efraim, the Torah says *L'Mateh Efraim, Hoshea bin Nun*, "For the tribe of Efraim, Hoshea bin Nun (*Bamidbar* 13:8)." When the Torah mentions Menashe, it writes, "*L'Mateh Yosef, l'mateh Menashe, Gadi ben Sussi*, "For the tribe of Yosef, for the tribe of Menashe, Gadi ben Sussi" (*ibid* :11). Why, concerning Hoshea/Yehoshua, does it not first mention his origin from the tribe of Yosef, as it does concerning the origin of Gadi *ben* Sussi from the tribe of Menashe?

Rav Heyman posits that this is a clear indication that Yehoshua did not belong to the tribe of Yosef. He originated from a new creation rendered by Yaakov. Had Yaakov not elevated Efraim to tribal status, someone of Yehoshua's distinction would not have descended from him – just as there would not have been an Achav or a Yaravam. They are the products of an illustrious lineage. This does not imply that Menashe was any less notable – he simply did not have such an illustrious descendant. Veritably, Yaakov elevated Efraim over Menashe. This could have been the reason that the former was the progenitor of Yehoshua.

The Torah alludes to this idea when Yaakov told Yosef, while it is true that Menashe is the *b'chor*, first born, "His younger brother will be greater than him." *Rashi* explains that this distinction will translate itself in his descendant, Yehoshua, who will take *Klal Yisrael* into the Holy Land and, as successor to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, will serve as the next link in the chain of Torah transmission to the Jewish People. This suggests that the capacity for producing an individual of such unique spiritual persona as Yehoshua was derived from Efraim's *gadlus*, distinction, which took on a new perspective when Yaakov elevated him to tribal status.

We may add that, with greatness, comes greater responsibility and accountability. The individual who has it within him to produce Yehoshua must guard himself against also producing a Yaravam

or an Achav.