

## And Moshe gave to them, to the Bnei Gad, and the Bnei Reuven and half of the tribe of Menashe ben Yosef. (32:33)

In the previous text, we find that *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* requested to remain in *Eiver HaYarden*. How did *shevet Menashe* enter into the situation? Moreover, why did only a part of *shevet Menashe* stay? Last, why did they receive such a large parcel of land? The *Ramban* contends that actually Moshe asked for volunteers to join the two tribes who remained in *Eiver HaYarden*. Part of the tribe of Menashe responded, probably because of their abundant flocks. In his commentary on *Sefer Devarim*, the **Netziv** claims that Moshe insisted that part of *shevet Menashe* move to *Eiver HaYarden*. No Jewish community can maintain its spiritual status quo unless *Torah* scholars are in their midst, teaching, disseminating *Torah* and inspiring people to follow the standard they exemplify. The tribe of Menashe included such people. Only after they consented to move east did Moshe agree to let *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* remain. By doing so, Moshe meant to set a precedent for all future generations, asserting that a community has viability only if it also has dedicated *Torah* scholars among its active members.

In *Pirkei Avos 6:9* the *Mishnah* addresses the issue of living in a *Torah* environment, presenting the correct attitude one must manifest towards this endeavor: *Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma said, "I was once walking on the road, when a man met me and greeted me. I returned his greeting. He said to me, 'Rabbi, from what place are you?' I told him, 'From a great city of scholars and teaching scribes am I.' He said to me, 'Rabbi, would you be willing to live with us in our place? I would then give you a million dinarii and precious stones and pearls.' I answered him, 'Were you to give me all the silver and gold and precious stones in the world, I would live nowhere but in a place of Torah.'* On the surface, this simple narrative demonstrates how a *talmid chacham*, *Torah* scholar, reacted in a specific situation, indicating his overriding desire to reside only in a *makom Torah*, a community where the study of *Torah* reigns. The commentators, however, perceive that this *Mishnah* teaches us a number of compelling lessons.

First, let us address the actual dialogue which ensued between Rabbi Yosi and his would-be benefactor. The man offered him an opportunity to improve his situation by moving to another city. Why did Rabbi Yosi immediately respond with a negative attitude? What prompted him to think that the city in which the man lived was not a place of *Torah*? **Abarbanel** suggests the answer lies in the formulation of the stranger's offer. When one is willing to pay an exorbitant sum of money for a commodity, it must be rare. If people are prepared to pay a million dollars for a *Torah* scholar, obviously the place must be bereft of *Torah*.

We suggest that the stranger's attitude created a negative impression. He presented himself as a person who is used to getting what he wants - through money. He felt he could "buy" a *Torah* scholar. A city where the *Torah* scholars are "bought" and "sold" as a commodity is not a place that can be considered a *makom Torah*. Furthermore, a *Torah* scholar is not engaged simply by offering him money. Did he investigate Rabbi Yosi? Did he have him tested? The stranger's

alacrity was indicative of his attitude.

**Reb Yitzchak Bunim, zl**, notes the "pronoun" "I" (will give you a million...) in the stranger's offer. A man who speaks for the community has no right to say "I," unless he is really implying that he represents the entire community. His power and position determine who will be hired. In effect, he was doing the hiring and dispensing of the salary. A community that has a single person "in charge," one individual who makes or controls the decisions, one person who -- due to his financial standing -- is obsessed with the pronoun, "I," is not a place for a *ben Torah* to live.

After all was said and done, the situation was that a man of means offering support to Rabbi Yosi in a splendid and dignified manner. Rabbi Yosi would no longer have to worry about the source of his next "dollar." He could have immersed himself totally in the study of *Torah*. Is that really such a difficult proposition to accept? Furthermore, with all that money, even if the community was not *Torah* oriented, they would have been able to "buy" *Torah*. They would have had the means to bring in a *kollel*, build a *Yeshivah* and schools that would properly address the needs of their youth. What could be so bad?

**Reb Yitzchak Bunim** feels the answer lies in the information that the stranger omitted. He did not mention a proposal to build a *Yeshivah*, arrange for community study groups, a *shul*, a *mikvah* -- any of the usual "staples" a *Torah* community needs to survive. Neither did he indicate that the people would support a school - morally or financially. He merely was prepared to offer a sizable salary/bribe to have a rabbi dwell among them, to dignify their community. He was not asking the rabbi to "do" anything - to teach, to build a *Torah* community. He sought a *Torah* "presence," the way some people desire a nice garden. This type of offer was an opportunity for stagnation and disaster, not creativity and growth.

Last, the words of my *rebbe*, **Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl**, appropriately summarize the reason for Rabbi Yosi's refusal. "We must realize," the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was wont to say, "you cannot create a *makom Torah* with money alone. One must apply blood, sweat, and tears to build *Torah*." *Mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, heart's devotion, unstinting dedication to *Torah* ideals and values - these are the basic ingredients required for *Torah* to blossom in a community. Money cannot create a *Torah* atmosphere. Is it any wonder that Rabbi Yosi refused the offer?