

Bnei Reuven and Bnei Gad had abundant livestock. (32:1)

The Torah teaches us that, following the war with Midyan, the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe were beset with an abundance of cattle. They asked to remain on the other side of the Jordan and enter *Eretz Yisrael* only for the purpose of war. In other words, they were not adverse to helping their brothers in their fight to rid the Holy Land of the pagan nations who inhabited it; they just wanted to return to the lush land on the other side of the Jordan, so that they would have sufficient feed for their animals. While it appears a simple request, motivated by material exigencies, the real issue is to determine why these tribes had such a large volume of cattle – so much more than the other tribes. After all, they had all left Egypt together. Following the war with Midyan, they all shared equally in the spoils. Why were they different? Furthermore, why did half the tribe of Menashe join with them?

In *Likutei HaAri* (*Parashas Matos*), the *Arizal* focuses on the origins of these tribes. He posits that the roots of these three tribes were different. In fact, their roots were not as spiritually pristine as those of their brothers. We return to the original “lie,” compliments of Lavan, who promised Rachel *Imeinu* to Yaakov *Avinu* as a wife. The Patriarch, would, in turn, work for the swindler for seven years. On the evening of the nuptials, Lavan did what he did best – made a switch, replacing Rachel with Leah *Imeinu*. While both sisters were aware of the substitution, Yaakov was not. Indeed, it was not until the next morning that Yaakov discovered that he had been a victim of Lavan’s treachery. Some things do not change. That night Leah conceived, and the seed of Reuven was implanted. As a result, the creation of Reuven was without Yaakov’s knowledge, since he thought that he had married Rachel. The blemish that ensued as a consequence of the mistaken identity endured, tainting Reuven’s lineage. His conception lacked the element of perfection.

The roots of Gad were, likewise, a bit murky. Rachel gave Bilhah, her maidservant, to Yaakov, with his awareness and acceptance. Rachel hoped to achieve a form of motherhood through the medium of her maidservant. According to the *Arizal*, Leah also gave her maidservant, Zilpah, to Yaakov for the purpose of increasing her motherhood status. This act, however, did not have the Patriarch’s knowledge or acceptance. It was only the next morning that Yaakov became aware that he had been with Zilpah, who had conceived that night. Her son, Gad, was born as a result. Consequently, Gad was also the product of a surreptitious relationship. Both Reuven and Gad were begotten in a manner which sidestepped Yaakov: Reuven descended from the mother who was substituted for the wife whom Yaakov thought he was marrying; Gad descended from an act that represented a tinge of affront to the relationship *bein adam l’chaveiro*, between man and his fellow man.

This miniscule blemish in the creation of these two *shevatim*, tribes, was sufficient to prevent their descendants from receiving a portion in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Holy Land is perfectly holy. As such, the right to ownership in the Land applies only to those who are blemish-free, whose lineage is not the result of an interpersonal slight.

While this explains why Hashem gave Reuven and Gad opportunities that did not favor their residence in *Eretz Yisrael*, what about *Shevet Menashe*? Where does he fit into the equation, and why was only half of his tribe affected? *Mishpatei HaTorah* suggests that here, too, questionable lineage might have existed. Menashe's mother was Osnas, daughter of Dinah bas Yaakov. Osnas was conceived when her mother, Dinah, was violated by Shechem (*Targum Yonasan, Bereishis* 41:45, and *Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos*). Thus, Osnas' creation was also tainted (as a product of Dinah and Shechem). Therefore, when Osnas conceived Menashe, she still had a part of Shechem in her, which was "transferred" to Menashe. Since only half of Menashe was victim to this spiritual blemish, only half of his tribe remained in *Ever Ha'Yarden*. On the other hand, Ephraim, his younger brother, was the product of complete purity, the earlier taint from Shechem having departed from Osnas with her previous birth.

In his *Yosef Lekach*, the *Chida* adds that, despite the spiritual taint that remained over Reuven and Gad -- a blemish which resulted in the Divine decree that they not be included in the apportioning of *Eretz Yisrael* -- Hashem refused to humiliate them by publicly disqualifying them from that which their brothers were all sharing. After all, they were holy and righteous *shevatim*, who, through a series of events beyond their control and prior to their births, created a situation whereby they were deemed different. Thus, Hashem manipulated the playing field, such that they themselves would ask to live in *Ever HaYarden*. Thus, it was only after the war with Midyan, which was the final national function prior to entering the Land, that Hashem provided these tribes with a larger portion of the spoils. As a result, they were overwhelmed with material abundance to the point that they felt it prudent to remain outside of the Land. We see how far Hashem went to protect the honor of these *shevatim*. We also derive an important lesson which any student of Torah, or life for that matter, should acknowledge: we are unaware of the rest of the story. Hashem has a Divine plan in which He choreographs everyone's actions to a specific role and scene. We should not question, because we cannot grasp the answer. We should trust, be patient and wait for that glorious day on which He will answer all our questions and resolve all our issues.