

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 28

Matos-Masei

The Context:

After the tribes of Gad and Reuven requested to inherit land on other side of the Jordan, and after Moshe admonished them and they reached a compromise, the Torah relates how Moshe divided the lands between the tribes: “Moses gave the descendants of Gad and the descendants of Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Yosef, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan the land together with its cities within borders, the cities of the surrounding territory. (Bamidbar 32:33)

The obvious question is how did Menashe become implicated in this episode? Throughout the narrative, only the tribes of Gad and Reuven were part of the discussion. Yet Moshe gave the lands under discussion to half of Menashe as well, without their request, why?

The Explanation:

Commenting on the tribe of Menashe’s sacrifice in honor of the inauguration of the Mishkan, the Midrash says that the two oxen offered alluded to the “tribe of Menashe which was divided and took two portions in the Land, half in the Land of Canaan and half in the Transjordan.” (Bamidbar Rabbah, Nasso 7:14)

This implies that Menashe’s settling in Transjordan was a positive development, and it did not at all have the negative motivation that Moshe assigned to the request of Reuven and Gad. Why was Menashe’s divided portion praised?

All fundamental aspects of the Jewish people’s development had to be processed through Moshe. The idea of redemption, the giving of Torah, and the inheritance of the Land of Israel as well. G-d showed Moshe the entirety of the land prior to their entering, because Moshe’s vision affected a form of acquisition of the land for the Jewish people. Even if Moshe was not going to personally lead them into the land, he

had to initiate their conquest and connection with it through his sight.

G-d's promise of the land to the Jewish people included a future expansion of Israel's borders with the coming of Moshiach. Because all things must be mediated through Moshe, this eventual expansion had also to be initiated by Moshe. This is why Moshe granted a portion of the Transjordan to half the tribe of Menashe. This land, not technically part of the land of Israel promised by G-d, echoed the idea of the expansion of the land beyond its original borders. Giving this to Menashe in the very beginning of the Jewish people's conquest was Moshe's way of foreshadowing that the true inheritance of the land of Israel included portions beyond its borders.

This differed from the tribes of Gad and Reuben's request which was a) initiated by themselves, not by Moshe, b) motivated by their desire for material gain, c) evinced a disregard for the land of Israel, and d) was not a request for an inheritance saddling both sides of the Jordan, but just the Transjordan.

Why did Moshe choose Menashe to receive the precursor to the inheritance of the Messianic era? The tribe of Menashe

demonstrated a deep love for the land of Israel during the episode of Tzelofchad's daughters. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to Moshe to grant them this privilege of possessing land on both sides of the Jordan, the current Israel, and the future Israel.

On a deeper level, the name Menashe means "for G-d has caused me to forget my father's house," alluding to the amnesiac effects of exile on the soul. Yosef gave this name to his eldest son to express his anguish at his exiled state, and to arouse within him the fortitude to not forget where he came from, to always long after home. Thus, the tribe of Menashe looks toward the fullest possible redemption, and does not make peace with any form of exile or partial redemption. This is why Menashe inherited the land that would become part of Israel only in the future redemption.

This also clarifies why the tribe of Levi was given cities of refuge on the other side of the Jordan, even though they cherished the land of Israel, and would seemingly not want to reside outside its borders. The land on the transjordan is part of the future Israel, and therefore the Levites residing there alludes to their connection to the entire land, both present and future.
