

PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAT PINCHAS

Tzelafchad's Daughters – The Love of Eretz Yisrael

תְּנֵה לָנוּ אֲחֻזָּה בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵי אָבִינוּ

Give us a holding among our father's brothers (Bamidbar 27:4)

Women and the Love of Eretz Yisrael

Chazal have noted regarding the Generation of the *Midbar* that it was specifically the women among Klal Yisrael who exhibited a special love for Eretz Yisrael (*Bamidbar Rabbah, parsha 21, siman 11*):

אותו הדור היו הנשים גודרות מה שהאנשים פורצים ... וכן במרגלים שהוציאו דבה ... ועליהם נגזרה הגזירה, אבל הנשים לא היו עמהם בעצה, שכתוב למעלה מן הפרשה, "כי אמר ה' להם מות ימותו במדבר ולא נותר מהם איש" — איש ולא אשה, על שלא רצו להכנס לארץ. אבל הנשים קרבו לבקש נחלה בארץ, לכן נכתבה פרשה זו סמוך למיתת דור המדבר, שמשם פרצו האנשים וגדרו הנשים.

In that generation, the women were circumspect about matters which the men had breached ... and similarly with regards to the Meraglim who slandered ... and the decree was issued concerning them (the men). However, the women did not join together with them in that counsel, as it says prior to this parsha (26:65) "For Hashem had

said of them ‘They shall surely die in the Wilderness,’ and not a man was left of them.” [This refers specifically to] a man — and not to a woman, on account of the fact that they (the men) did not wish to enter the Land. However, the women came forward to request an inheritance in the Land. Therefore, this parsha is juxtaposed to (the pesukim dealing with) the death of the Generation of the Midbar, for concerning that matter which the men had breached, the women were circumspect.

In contrast to the men among B’nei Yisrael who declared that they would rather return to Mitzrayim than enter Eretz Yisrael, Tzelafchad’s daughters approach Moshe and request an inheritance specifically in Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, Chazal inform us that this love of Eretz Yisrael was itself a form of “inheritance” that these women received from their ancestor Yosef. It is not for naught the Torah here (*pasuk* 1) traces their lineage all the way back to Yosef, as the *Sifrei* comments (*Bamidbar, siman* 133):

כשם שחיבב יוסף את ארץ ישראל, כך חיבבוהו בנות צלפחד

Just as Yosef possessed a love for Eretz Yisrael, so too did Tzelafchad’s daughters.

Yosef’s love for Eretz Yisrael is demonstrated by Chazal elsewhere (*Devarim Rabbah, parsha* 2, *siman* 5), from the fact that even when he was in jail in Mitzrayim he identified himself as coming from “the Land of the Ivrim” (*Bereishit* 40:15).¹

“Love of The Land,” or “Love of Land”?

However, there is a very basic question which we need to ask regarding Chazal’s appraisal of Tzelafchad’s daughters. Where in their request for an inheritance do we see a love for Eretz Yisrael specifically? Given that this was the location is where their father’s inheritance was, that is where they requested to inherit. Perhaps if the land was somewhere else, they would have requested it there!

This question is discussed by the Rosh Yeshivah of Volozhin, the *Netziv*, in his *peirush Emek HaNetziv* to the *Sifrei* (*Pinchas, siman* 2):

The proof of their love for Eretz Yisrael does not come from their request for an inheritance there, for even if it was no more beloved to them than any other land, would they not request their inheritance there? Should they instead go back to Mitzrayim? Rather, the proof comes from the fact that they requested an inheritance in Eretz Yisrael specifically, and not on the East Side of the Jordan River.² It is for this reason they asked for an inheritance “בְּתוֹךְ אֶחָיו אֲבִינֵנוּ” — among our father’s brothers,” and

1 As we mentioned in *Parshat Shemot* (Chapter 31), the Midrash contrasts Yosef who identified with his land and therefore merited to be buried there, with Moshe who did not identify with his land, but rather was called an “*Ish Mitzri*” by Yitro’s daughters, who did not merit to be buried there (see there for a discussion of this criticism of Moshe). Perhaps this may help explain why the parsha of *Tzelafchad’s* daughters is immediately followed by Hashem talking to Moshe about the fact that he will not be buried in Eretz Yisrael (*pesukim* 12–14).

2 [Which had already been conquered, as described in *Parshat Chukat*, and where half of their father’s Tribe would settle.]

did not request that it should be “among our family,” for the family of Gilad settled on the east side of the Jordan, while Tzelafchad’s brothers all settled in Eretz Yisrael itself, as is described in Sefer Yehoshua, Perek 17. Similarly, they chose their portion in Eretz Yisrael itself, and this is due to the great love they had for Eretz Yisrael, thus they did not wish to settle on the East Side of the Jordan, even though it had already been conquered.

Tzelafchad’s daughters succeeded in sensing the *kedushah* of Eretz Yisrael, and the higher level of *kedushah* that exists on the west side of the Jordan river than on the east side. Their desire for *kedushah* led them to forgo land that was already settled at that time and wait for land in Eretz Yisrael itself that had yet to be settled.