

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

This Parasha series is dedicated
Le-zekher Nishmat HaRabbanit Chana bat HaRav Yehuda Zelig zt"l.

This parasha series is dedicated
in honor of Rabbi Menachem Leibtag and Rabbi Elchanan Samet.

PARASHAT PINCHAS

The Daughters of Tzelofchad By Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

Our *parasha* records the request (*Bamidbar* 27:3-4) by the daughters of Tzelofchad to receive an inheritance in *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel:

"Our father died in the wilderness, but he was not among the congregation that gathered against God in the congregation of Korach; rather, he died for his own sin, and he had no sons. Why should our father's name be lessened among his family because he has no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers."

What is the background of this request?

Census of the Families

In the previous chapter (26:1-4), the Torah describes the command for a new census:

And it was, after the plague, that God said to Moshe and to Elazar, son of Aharon the *Kohen*, saying, "Count the entire Israelite congregation, from the age of twenty years and upward, according to their patriarchal houses – everyone of Israel who is fit for war." So Moshe and Elazar the *Kohen* spoke with them on the plains of Mo'av, by the Yarden, near Yericho, saying: "From twenty years and upward," as God commanded Moshe and the Israelites who went forth from the land of Egypt.

The purpose of the census is not only to count how many people remain after the plague. Indeed, the greater purpose seems to be what we read at its end (vv. 52-55):

God spoke to Moshe, saying: "To these shall the land be divided for an inheritance, according to the number of names. To the more numerous you shall give a greater inheritance, and to the less numerous you shall give a smaller inheritance; each shall receive its inheritance in accordance with those who were numbered for it.

But the land shall be divided by lot; according to the names of the tribes of their fathers, they shall inherit."

In other words, the people who are counted in this census are the ones who will receive an inheritance in the land. But which people are mentioned by name in this census?

Let us examine the first tribe, that of Reuven, in which the families are the Chanokhi, Pallu'i, Chetzroni and Karmi (v. 6). Who are Chanokh, Pallu, Chetzron and Karmi? These are the sons of Reuven as enumerated in *Bereishit* 46:8-9, at the beginning of the list of those who go down to Egypt:

These are the names of the children of Yisrael who came to Egypt, Yaakov and his sons: Yaakov's firstborn was Reuven. And the sons of Reuven were Chanokh and Pallu and Chetzron and Karmi.

Similarly, for almost all of the tribes, the names mentioned in the census in *Parashat Pinchas* are the sons and grandsons of Yaakov's sons (the second and third generation from him), and they are the same people who are mentioned in *Bereishit* 46 as those who go down to Egypt.

Hence, this census does not list the names of the people who are about to enter the land. Rather, it lists the names of the families ("patriarchal houses") which will receive an inheritance under their name. Each of these families is named after its ancestor who goes down to Egypt – the second or third generation of Yaakov's family.

Only two of the tribes deviate from this format: Reuven and Menasheh.

Datan and Aviram

Let us take another look at the tribe of Reuven:

Reuven was the firstborn of Yisrael. The sons of Reuven: Chanokh, the Chanokhi family; of Pallu, the Pallu'i family; of Chetzron, the Chetzroni family; of Karmi, the Karmi family. These are the Ruveni families, and their number was 43,730. (*Bamidbar* 26:5-7)

Reuven

Chanokh

Pallu

Chetzron

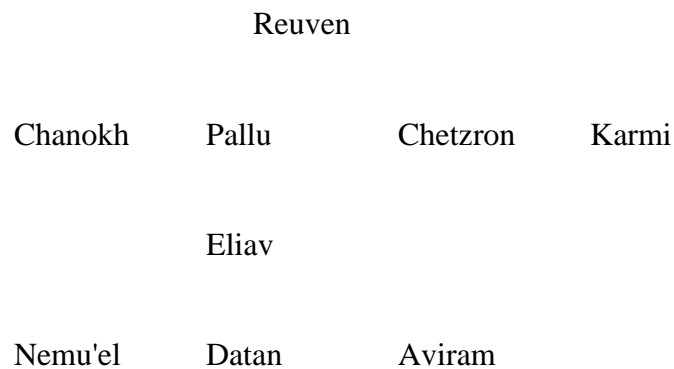
Karmi

Thus far, the genealogical list for Reuven resembles that of all the other tribes: we find the names of the four brothers comprising the second generation, which become the names of the "families."

However, following this summary of the Ruveni, the Torah goes on (vv. 8-11) to list more descendants:

And the son of Pallu was Eliav. And the sons of Eliav were Nemu'el and Datan and Aviram – these were the same Datan and Aviram who were the communal leaders who strove against Moshe and against Aharon in the congregation of Korach, when they strove against God. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korach, when the congregation died, when the fire devoured the two hundred and fifty men, and they became a sign. But the children of Korach did not die.

These verses feature another two generations of the descendants of Reuven: the third generation (Eliav) and the fourth generation (Nemu'el, Datan and Aviram):



The people who appear here (Eliav, etc.) are not listed as heads of families; they are only mentioned by their own names. Thus, there is no deviation from the general model in terms of the number of families; however, there is a deviation in form: within a list of family names and numbers, we find a biographical note that appears irrelevant to the census.

Tzelofchad

Let us now turn our attention to the tribe of Menasheh (vv. 29-33):

The sons of Menasheh: of Makhir, the Makhiri family; and Makhir begot Gilad; of Gilad – the Giladi family. These are the sons of Gilad: I'ezer, the I'ezri family; of Chelek, the Chelki family; and Asri'el, the Asri'eli family; and Shekhem, the Shikhmi family; and Shemida, the Shemida'i family; and Chefer, the Chefri family. And Tzelofchad son of Chefer had no sons, only daughters; and the names of Tzelofchad's daughters were Machla and No'a, Chogla, Milka, and Tirtza.

Menasheh

Makhir

Gilad

Tezer Chelek Asri'el Shekhem Shemida Chefer

Tzelofchad

The listing of the tribe of Menasheh involves two deviations from the model for all the other tribes:

- a. The families that are listed belong not only to the second and third generation, but primarily to the fourth.^{1[1]}
- b. Mention is made of Tzelofchad – the fifth generation – and the Torah names his daughters, the sixth generation. This represents a clear deviation from the genealogical context, limited as it is to the enumeration of "families."

Why is there a deviation in the count of families for the tribe of Menasheh, such that the families of the fourth generation are included? This demands some explanation, and it may be that the reason relates to Yosef's special status.

However, it is possible that there is a different explanation. In *Bereishit* 46, Menasheh and Efrayim are explicitly mentioned (v. 20), but not their children. Clearly, though, the descendants of Menasheh and Efrayim must receive an inheritance in the land. Therefore, their families are detailed in our *parasha* for the first time. Owing to this unique situation, the lists of the families of Menasheh and Efrayim are more flexible than the lists of the other tribes: it allows for the listing of further generations, since in any case none of the descendants of Menasheh who appear are mentioned in *Bereishit* 46.^{2[2]}

This question requires further investigation, but we shall not pursue it here. (Readers are invited to consider this and propose explanations.)

Loss of Inheritance

^{1[1]} In addition, while Menasheh is considered a tribe in its own right, from the genealogical perspective – i.e., counting the order of generations – Menasheh is the son of Yosef. Thus, the Torah here actually lists *seven* generations from Yaakov.

^{2[2]} Nevertheless, the question remains why the members of the fourth generation are still referred to as "families." This question is particularly puzzling in light of the fact that when it comes to the tribe of Efrayim, the Torah adheres to the same model that applies to all the other tribes: the "families" are named after only the second and third generations. Had the reason for the deviation in the case of Menasheh been related to the special status of Yosef, we would expect to find the same deviation in the case of Efrayim, who received a special blessing from Yaakov (*Bereishit* 48:19).

Why does the Torah insert two digressions in the midst of the census – one for Datan and Aviram and the sons of Korach, and one for the daughters of Tzelofchad?³[3]

a. Datan and Aviram

Concerning Datan and Aviram's story, the Ramban comments:

The Torah mentions this in order to tell us that the entire inheritance of the family of Pallu went to Nemu'el alone, since Datan and Aviram and all that was theirs were swallowed up. Alternatively, as our Sages taught (*Bava Batra* 18b), it may hint that they lost their portion of the land even though they were among those who left Egypt and hence were supposed to receive an inheritance.

According to Ramban, the story of Datan and Aviram is recalled here because it has some bearing on the division of the land: Datan and Aviram died, and as a result, Nemu'el received the entire inheritance of the family of Pallu.

Ramban cites the *midrash* which adds that not only could Datan and Aviram not receive an inheritance in the technical sense – since they (and their children) were dead – but, in the wake of their sin, they had lost their right to inherit.

b. The Sons of Korach

In the same verse, the Torah goes on to describe the dispute of Korach, which is the reason for the deaths of Datan and Aviram. From this verse we become aware of a fact that is not known to us from the account in *Parashat Korach*: "The sons of Korach did not die." As the *midrash* (*Otzar Ha-midrashim* [Eisenstein], *Hashkem*, p. 139) teaches:

From where do we know that Korach had children and that they survived? From the verse, "But the sons of Korach did not die." And from where do we know that they were righteous? From the fact that it is written (*Tehillim* 46:1-2), "...of the sons of Korach... a song: 'God is our refuge.'"

This psalm speaks about how the sons of Korach put their faith in God and are confident that they will not be swallowed up together with their father, since they are righteous.

Or, as Targum Yonatan explains:

The sons of Korach were not of their father's counsel; they followed the teaching of Moshe the Prophet, and they did not die in the plague, nor were they attacked by the fire, nor were they consumed by the earth's swallowing.

Why does the Torah mention the sons of Korach specifically here? Why is here the most appropriate place to note that they did not die? This should have been noted in *Parashat Korach*!

³[3] Another slight deviation (somewhat similar to those described above) is to be found in the tribe of Yehuda, where mention is made of Er and Onan (v. 19), who die prematurely; we will discuss this below. On the other hand, there are three sons of Binyamin and a son of Asher who vanish between *Bereishit* 46 and *Bamidbar* 26. Also, Asher is the only son of Yaakov whose daughter is named (v. 46).

Apparently, the Torah has a special interest in mentioning the sons of Korach specifically in the context of this census, which deals with the division of the land for inheritance.

The sons of Korach are Levites and therefore receive no land. However, we may ask: had they been from some other tribe, would they have received land, or would they have lost this right because of the sin of their father, Korach?

The Torah does not address this question explicitly, but from the speech of the daughters of Tzelofchad we are able to understand their view of Korach's sons. The sisters emphasize that their father had nothing to do with Korach's dispute. They mention this as part of their justification for receiving their father's inheritance. In other words, as they understand it, Korach's rebels deserve to lose their right to the land, and if the father loses his right to inherit, then his sons would not receive any land (as they would have no one to inherit it from). This is why they emphasize that their father had no part in Korach's sin, and therefore giving them land in their father's name presents no problem.

But are Tzelofchad's daughters correct in their understanding of the situation? Perhaps the fact that the Torah chooses this particular point to mention that "the sons of Korach did not die" in fact leads to the opposite conclusion: Datan and Aviram and Korach died because of their sin, and lost their right to inherit. The sons of Korach did not die, since they were not party to the sin, and therefore they are mentioned here, in the census of those who will inherit the land, so as to tell us that if they had been from any other tribe they would have been deserving of an inheritance in the land. (Since they are Levites, their portion will be in the Levitical cities.)

c. Tzelofchad, Er and Onan

The story of Tzelofchad, which is also recounted as part of the census, describes another situation through which a person may lose his inheritance: the lack of any sons.

In fact, Tzelofchad is not the only person to lose his inheritance because he dies without sons. In verse 19, the Torah makes brief mention of other people in the same category: Er and Onan, the sons of Yehuda. The loss of the inheritance of Er and Onan is simple and clear: both die childless, before the family goes down to Egypt, and therefore they are not included in the count of the families. In the case of Tzelofchad, the situation is more complex: firstly, he is among those who come out of Egypt and are meant to receive an inheritance in the land; secondly, Tzelofchad has no sons, but he does have daughters.

Thus, the narratives that appear in the midst of the census are directly related to it: they describe different situations in which a person loses his inheritance in the land – whether in the wake of a serious transgression, or because he had no heirs.

d. Tzelofchad vs. Korach

Immediately following the census, Tzelofchad's daughters present themselves and ask that a clear distinction be drawn between these cases. They claim that it is unjust for their father, who bore no sons, to lose his inheritance just like someone involved in Korach's sin. Inheritance of the land is an important and prestigious right; a person should not be deprived of it only because he

has no sons! A person who bears no sons should not be placed in the same category as a person who is guilty of such a serious sin!

Now we are in a better position to understand the claim of Tzelofchad's daughters (v. 3): **"He was not among the congregation that gathered against God in the congregation of Korach;** rather, he died for his own sin, and he had no sons."

"Why should our father's name be lessened?"

The women present their claim not for themselves, but rather on behalf of their father, Tzelofchad. At first it seems difficult to understand their problem: after all, Tzelofchad is no longer among the living. Why would he need an inheritance? Are his daughters seeking to acquire an inheritance for themselves? Or are they perhaps questioning the procedures for inheritance, according to which only sons receive a portion of the land?

From the continuation of their speech we see that the latter is not the case.

The following verse presents the crux of their problem: "Why should **our father's name** be lessened among his family...?" Each male member of a "family" receives a portion in the land; that portion carries his name, and therefore represents a memorial to him. If Tzelofchad receives no inheritance, his name will be lost.^{4[4]} Tzelofchad's daughters seek to perpetuate their father's memory,^{5[5]} and for this purpose they ask to receive an inheritance that will bear his name.

Hence, the quest of Tzelofchad's daughters is a positive one, and God accepts their claim (vv. 6-9):

God said to Moshe, saying: "The daughters of Tzelofchad speak well; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance in the midst of their father's brothers, and you shall transfer their father's inheritance to them. And you shall speak to the Israelites, saying: 'If a person dies and he has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers...'"

Not only does God accept their claim, but He responds in a most positive manner: they "speak well." Rashi adds, "Happy is a person whose words God verifies."

Tzelofchad's Inheritance and the Second Paschal Offering

The story of Tzelofchad's daughters is reminiscent of another story in *Sefer Bamidbar* (9:6-8):

^{4[4]} For an extensive discussion, see the VBM shiur by Rav E. Samet, who explains: "A person's 'name'... is what continues his existence within human reality even after his death. A person's physical existence ceases upon his death, but his 'name' – his metaphysical essence – continues to exist in our world under certain conditions."

^{5[5]} This reminds us of *yibbum*, levirate marriage, the purpose of which is to ensure that a man who dies childless has some continuation and memorial in the world (*Devarim* 25:5-10). Indeed, according to the Gemara (*Bava Batra* 119b), the sisters argue that if they are not worthy heirs for their father, their mother should merit *yibbum*.

And there were people who were ritually impure through contact with the dead, and they could not perform the paschal offering that day, and they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day. And these people said to him: "We are ritually impure through contact with the dead; why should we be lessened, not sacrificing God's offering at its proper time among the Israelites?"

And Moshe said to them: "Stand and I shall hear what God commands in your regard."

The two stories share a number of common elements:

- It is not clear what the law allows for in the situation, and the people involved require a response from God.
- The people adversely affected approach Moshe and the *Kohen* on their own initiative, with a positive request.^{6[6]}
- God agrees with the claim that the people bring.
- In the wake of the request, new laws are disseminated.
- The claim is formulated as a questioning of "lessening" (*g-r-a*): "Why should we be lessened, not sacrificing...;" "Why should our father's name be lessened..."

The story of the daughters of Tzelofchad and the story of those who are impure at the time of the paschal offering describe situations in which all of the Jews participate in an important commandment, and there are some people who, against their will and through no fault of their own, are prevented from participating in the mitzva. These people are not ready to forego their right, and they express their concern that if they are not able to participate, they will be "lessened;" in a sense, they will not be part of the nation. The paschal offering (symbolizing the redemption from Egypt) and the inheritance of the land are both central experiences of the molding of the Jewish nation. Anyone who does not participate feels himself "lessened" – an outsider. In both cases, God accepts the claim and allows for an amendment of or deviation from the original law, allowing these people to participate like any other member of the nation.

Righteous (*Tzaddik*) and Worthy (*Zakkai*)

Both groups of claimants are ultimately viewed as people with great *zekhut* (merit), since it is through them that a law is instituted or amended, such that greater numbers of people will be able to fulfill the paschal offering or to receive an inheritance in the land, as Rashi explains:

This passage should have been conveyed by Moshe, like all the rest of the Torah, but [the petitioners] merited to have it revealed through them, since (*Shabbat* 32a) "Merit comes about through those who are meritorious." (9:7)

This passage should have been written by Moshe, but the daughters of Tzelofchad merited that it be written through them. (25:7)

^{6[6]} In two other instances, that of the blasphemer and the stick-gatherer, the law is unclear. However, in those cases, the people involved are sinners presented for judgment, while the daughters of Tzelofchad and the paschal petitioners approach of their own accord for "judgment," with an affirmative claim; they are not on trial.

According to what we have said thus far, the argument of Tzelofchad's daughters is a worthy and just one. They claim that their father was not an evil person, and therefore he is worthy of receiving an inheritance. Their argument is viewed by God in a most positive light. Since these sisters are so righteous, seeking the perpetuation of their father's memory rather than any personal gain, and understanding so clearly the importance and significance of an inheritance in *Eretz Yisrael*, we may deduce something about their father, who educated them in this way. Indeed, Rashi (27:1) comments:

"Of the family of Menasheh, son of Yosef" – why is this said? Is it not already written, "son of Menasheh"? It is to teach that Yosef loved the land, as it is written (*Bereishit* 50:25), "And you shall take up my bones," and his daughters loved the land, as it is written (*Bamidbar* 27:4), "Give us an inheritance." This teaches that they were all righteous.

"He died for his own sin"

However, there is one detail that disturbs this happy picture. Tzelofchad's daughters mention as part of their argument that their father "died for his own sin". Why do they mention this? As the Ramban notes, it seems superfluous.

The specific mention that Tzelofchad died "for his own sin" conveys the sense that some specific sin was involved. Tzelofchad's daughters, so concerned for their father's name, would surely not knowingly have besmirched his reputation by stating that "he died for his own sin".

Various explanations have been offered as to Tzelofchad's sin,^{7[7]} each with its own difficulties, and none of them clearly solves the problem.^{8[8]} In any event, the Torah does not state explicitly what the sin was, and we therefore leave this question open, with the assumption that whatever it was, so long as it was not an especially serious transgression, it is irrelevant to the question of the inheritance. Inheritance is something far more firmly grounded; it is not easily lost. Only in the most extreme cases (such as that of Datan and Aviram) does a person lose it. Tzelofchad's daughters, to whom the inheritance is of such great importance, are worthy of being the instrument through which the Jews are taught that such forfeiture almost never happens: even if a person sins, he does not lose his inheritance. Similarly, even if he has daughters but no sons, his inheritance is not lost; it is transferred to his daughters. This underscores the intense connection between the nation of Israel and the land which it is about to enter.

Appendix

What was Tzelofchad's sin? Various explanations have been offered:

a. Unspecific

^{7[7]} See appendix.

^{8[8]} It may be that the audience listening to the sisters' speech is aware of Tzelofchad's sin, such that his daughters cannot argue: our father deserves his inheritance because he was righteous. Instead, they argue: although we are aware that our father was not completely righteous – after all, "he died because of his sin" – we nevertheless feel that his sin was not so grave as to disinherit him.

In the Ramban's view, the reference is not meant to indicate any specific sin; what they mean is that Tzelofchad was not guilty of any terrible crime. "He died in his sin" – his own, small wrongdoing:

They meant that he died in the wilderness – he did not merit entering the land — because of his sin. Or, as the poet Rabbi Yehuda Ha-levi ז"ל explained, it is attached to "and he had no sons," as one would say today: "Due to our sins, such-and-such happened."

In his second answer, the Ramban refers to the popular expression associating misfortune with the imperfect spiritual status of an individual or generation, as one says, "Due to our sins, we have no Temple today," without referring to a specific sin. The sisters would thus essentially be saying: unfortunately, our father died without male offspring.

b. The Stick-Gatherer

Our Rabbis taught: "The stick-gatherer – this was Tzelofchad, for the text says, "And it was, while the Israelites were **in the wilderness**, that they found a man" (15:32) and later on it says (27:3), "Our father died **in the wilderness**." Since the latter instance is talking about Tzelofchad, we may assume that the former instance is also talking about Tzelofchad' – so says Rabbi Akiva." (*Shabbat* 96b)

However, even this explanation is quite surprising. Are we really justified in connecting two *parashiyot* solely on the basis of a single word that appears in both cases? This seems to be a very weak connection, lacking any logical basis. The word "*ba-midbar*" must be the symbol and sign of a far deeper connection.

Indeed, the word "*ba-midbar*" is rather unusual. The Torah generally makes specific note of the place where an event occurs. Here, in these two instances (Tzelofchad and the gatherer), the **location** is altogether unspecified: "in the wilderness." Therefore, the **time** when the event happened is also unclear (since we do not know where they are in their forty-year wilderness wanderings).

Thus, both in the story of the gatherer and in the argument on behalf of Tzelofchad, the Torah is telling us about a person who dies in the wilderness, following a sin, in an unspecified place and at an unspecified time. In both cases, the Torah notes (quite uncharacteristically) that the event takes place "in the wilderness."^{9[9]}

There are further points of similarity between the two stories, which might testify to a connection between them:

- a. Both cases are brought for a legal ruling, not only before Moshe, but before the *Kohen* and the entire congregation.^{10[10]}
- b. In both instances the court does not know how to rule.

^{9[9]} See our *shiur* on *Parashat Shelach* concerning this story.

^{10[10]} Here we read, "And they stood before Moshe and before Elazar the *Kohen*, and before the princes and the entire congregation;" concerning the gatherer we read (15:33), "And they brought him... to Moshe and to Aharon and to the entire congregation."

- c. Both narratives feature a paragraph break in the middle, followed by God's verdict.
- d. The daughters of Tzelofchad question, "Why should our father's name be lessened?", while in the story of the gatherer, the man's "name" is truly lessened – there is no indication as to his identity!

Hence it turns out that Rabbi Akiva's conclusion is not altogether baseless. The Torah tells us that Tzelofchad died in the wilderness as a result of a sin, and Rabbi Akiva feels that if the Torah notes that Tzelofchad sinned, apparently we are meant to know which sin is being referred to. In the story of the gatherer, there is some similarity to the story of Tzelofchad, and therefore Rabbi Akiva asserts that the two stories are connected: Tzelofchad is the gatherer.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Akiva's assertion raises two difficulties:

- a. On the theoretical level: the Torah does not say this explicitly, so how can Rabbi Akiva suggest it? From the story of Tzelofchad's daughters, it appears that their father's sin was not an especially grave one; moreover, the fact that his daughters are shown in such a positive light likewise reflects positively on him. This being the case, how can we attribute such a serious transgression to him?

This argument is raised by Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira, further on in the *gemara*:

"Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira counters: 'Akiva, either way, in the future you will have to give an accounting. If it is as you say, then the Torah [deliberately] conceals his identity, while you are revealing it; if it is not as you say, then you are slandering that righteous man!'"¹¹[11]

- b. On the technical level: the story of the gatherer apparently occurs during the second year after the Exodus from Egypt, after the Sin of the Spies (or possibly during the first year, according to some views). If so, some 38 years have already passed since the death of the gatherer by the time we reach the story of Tzelofchad's daughters. The youngest of his daughters must therefore be at least 40 years old. However, from the narrative in *Bamidbar* 36 we know that none of these women is married at the time of the verdict.

This question is addressed in *Sifrei Zuta*, Chapter 15:

Rabbi Shimon said to him: "We cannot say that the gatherer is Tzelofchad, because he gathers in the first year, on the twenty-first day of the second month. Is it then possible concerning the daughters of Tzelofchad – regal women, pleasant and pure – that the youngest of them waited forty years before marrying?"¹²[12]

¹¹[11] There are *midrashim* that solve this difficulty by positing that Tzelofchad is indeed the gatherer, but that his intentions are good: "He meant it for the sake of heaven. For the Jews were saying that since it had been decreed that they would not enter the land, owing to the episode of the Spies, they were no longer obligated to observe the commandments. Therefore [Tzelofchad] took it upon himself to desecrate Shabbat, in order that he would be killed, and others would witness it" (*Torah Shelema*, p. 211, par. 196).

¹²[12] We may solve this problem by recalling that the Torah does not actually state when the story of the gatherer took place. We are told that it is "in the wilderness," apparently following the Sin of the Spies, but there is no indication

Those who disagree with the assertion that Tzelofchad is the gatherer propose different possibilities as to his sin.

c. The war with the Kena'ani

Rabbi Shimon says: "When did Tzelofchad die? When it says, 'The Kena'ani, the king of Arad heard...' (21:1) — at that time, Tzelofchad died." (*Sifrei Zuta*, *ibid.*)

This tells us **when** he died — in the fortieth year, soon after Aharon's death, at the time of the Jews' first battle before entering the land — but not **why**: what sin made him deserving of death? Thus, the original question remains.

d. *Mapilim*

The Gemara (*Shabbat* 96b) goes on to suggest that Tzelofchad may have been among the *Mapilim* — the group that decides to press ahead and journey on to *Eretz Yisrael*, after God decrees death upon the whole generation in the wake of the Sin of the Spies (14:40-45). What is the basis for any connection between Tzelofchad and the *Mapilim*?

First of all, there is the death "in the wilderness": Tzelofchad's daughters assert that their father "died in the wilderness," and the story of the *Mapilim* describes in the clearest possible way what death "in the wilderness" means. Those who chose to oppose God's decree and to go on are killed immediately in battle in the wilderness.

Furthermore, the sin of the *Mapilim* reflects a very strong desire to reach *Eretz Yisrael*, and the same desire is reflected in the appeal by Tzelofchad's daughters. Perhaps Tzelofchad thereby educates his daughters towards an uncompromising love for the land. His act may have been misguided, leading to his death, but his daughters could have continued his ideology in a more positive way.

However, this opinion brings us back to the issue of the sisters' ages.

e. Rebellion against Moshe

According to the Zohar (Part III, *Parashat Balak*, 205b), Tzelofchad defies Moshe — but not as part of Korach's assembly. (For this reason, Moshe does not adjudicate the request of Tzelofchad's daughters on his own.) This cryptic explanation certainly exemplifies the idea of "his own sin," but it does prompt the question: if Korach's rebels do not deserve a portion in the land, why should the lone rebel Tzelofchad deserve his?

Thus, each explanation has its strengths and weaknesses.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

of when. The stay in the wilderness was a long one, and it is possible that the story of the gatherer took place at a later time, closer to the fortieth year. However, none of the commentators adopts this possibility. Some suggest that the offense occurs in the first year, while the others maintain that it takes place immediately after the Sin of the Spies.
