



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

Parasha Pinchas 5773

At times, our desire to live a Torah-inspired life comes into direct conflict with the messages and values that we receive from society. The expectation to live our lives governed by contemporary mores or zeitgeist, contrary to what we hold near and dear, can pose a significant challenge. Remaining true to our own ethical code might subject us to derision or scorn, leaving us deflated and disheartened.

How do we embolden ourselves to stay firm? How do we fortify ourselves to remain resolute?

In Parshas Pinchas, we learn about the episode of B'nos Tzelophchad - the five daughters of Tzelophchad: Machlah, Noah, Chaglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. Tzelophchad was from the generation of the Exodus and was therefore entitled to a portion in the Land of Israel. He perished in the desert, however, leaving only daughters. Because the laws of inheritance were not yet fully transmitted, there was uncertainty as to the women's rights to inherit their father's portion. Motivated by their great love for the Land of Israel, and confident in the righteousness of their claim, they came forward and presented their case to Moshe. Moshe inquired of G-d, who corroborated the claim of B'nos Tzelophchad and instructed Moshe to convey this law of inheritance to the entire nation for all time.

The greatness of B'nos Tzelophchad is self-evident, demonstrated by their love of the Land of Israel and their courage to present their claim. But the Medrash Yalkut Shimoni provides us insight into an additional dimension of their greatness. The Yalkut teaches us that every righteous individual who stands up for what is right and just in the face of opposing societal values merits the reward for what was otherwise destined for that entire generation. For example, Avraham stood firm against the idolatry of his time, Noach rose above the wickedness of his generation, while Lot resisted the cruel ways of Sodom. As a result, all of these luminaries merited the reward intended for their respective generations. So too, the Medrash continues, the B'nos Tzelophchad were entitled to such a grand reward for their conduct. B'nos Tzelophchad exhibited incredible love of the Land of Israel, and were willing to present their claim to the leader of the Jewish people in order to vindicate that love. Even more remarkable, though, was the fact that they were willing to stand firm against a society that was rebelliously demanding "Give us a leader so that we may return to Egypt!" In contrast to the rest of the nation's demonstration of a lack of faith in G-d and appreciation for the Land of Israel, B'nos Tzelophchad resisted the influences that surrounded them and took a stand in support of that which was sacred. Accordingly, they merited the great reward that was otherwise earmarked for the whole generation.

While peer pressure and social expectations to conform indeed form an imposing challenge, we should remember that the immense reward and love that we elicit from Above are commensurate with the difficulty of the circumstances. Recognizing and appreciating these situations as a wonderful opportunity to emulate our noble predecessors and draw close to G-d will provide us with the strength and courage to persevere.

***Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Menachem Winter***