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Did Yehoshua bin Nun have Children?

In Parshas Shelach, the spies returned from their mission of scoping out Eretz Yisrael. Of the twelve men sent, ten came back with disparaging reports. Only Yehoshua and Kalev dissented. The ten spies succeeded in creating hysteria among the people. The nation panicked and no longer wished to proceed into Eretz Yisrael. As a result, they were punished by Hashem. The entire generation was condemned to wander in the desert until they passed away, and would not enter Eretz Yisrael. Only their children would merit to enter.

Hashem added, “However, my servant Kalev; because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly, I shall bring him to the land to which he came and his offspring shall inherit it.” (*Bamidbar* 10:24)

Many Rishonim wonder why this *passuk* specifies Kalev and not Yehoshua. After all, both refrained from speaking badly, and presumably both should merit that “their offspring shall inherit it.”

The Chizkuni answers that since this *passuk* is specifically discussing “offspring inheriting the land,” and Yehoshua had no sons (בנים) to inherit, he is therefore not mentioned here.

This requires some analysis. The *halachah* is that if a man has no sons, his daughters become his inheritors — even in regard to inheriting a portion in Eretz Yisrael. So how does the fact that Yehoshua had no sons (בנים) exclude him from being mentioned in the *passuk*? It would seem that the Chizkuni is implying that Yehoshua had no children at all — neither sons nor daughters. Had Yehoshua had daughters, he would have been able to fulfill “his offspring shall inherit it,” and thus would presumably have been mentioned alongside Kalev.

And although the Chizkuni uses the word בנים, which normally translates as “sons,” it can sometimes refer more generally to “children.” Interpreting it this way makes more sense here — because, again, had Yehoshua had daughters, they would have inherited. Indeed, many other Rishonim who offer the same answer as the Chizkuni use the term *zera* (זרע), which more clearly means “offspring” or “descendants.”

There are many *Gemaros* that also imply that Yehoshua had no children.

SOTAH

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 35) states that when

Yehoshua began to speak up in opposition to the other spies, the people said to him, “Shall the person with the severed head (ראש קטיעה) speak before us?”

There are several explanations of this derogatory phrase. The *Iyun Yakov*, based on the *Aruch*, explains that “severed head” refers to the first letter *yud* of Yehoshua (the head of his name). *Yud* is the shortest letter and appears as if it is cut off, thus the head of his name was “severed.”

Obviously, this cannot simply be because his name began with a *yud* — many Jewish names start with *yud*, such as Yehuda, Yisrael, and Yochanan. Rather, he explains based on the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 107a) that Sarah only conceived after her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah, replacing the *yud* with a *hei*, in order to enable her to bear a child. As long as she had the *yud*, she remained barren. That same *yud* was added to Yehoshua’s name at the beginning of this *parashah* (*Bamidbar* 13:16) — perhaps implying that Yehoshua was (now) unable to have children.

EIRUVIN

The *Gemara* (*Eiruv* 63a) states that one who issues a halachic ruling in front of his rebbi is punished by going to his grave “without a child” (*b'lo valad* – בלא

ולד). The *Gemara* brings proof from last week's *parashah*, where Yehoshua rules in front of Moshe (*Bamidbar* 11:28), and thereupon did not merit to have children.

The *Gemara* then notes a *machlokes*: one opinion holds that Yehoshua was punished for speaking before his *rebbe*, while another says he was punished for causing Klal Yisrael to refrain from marital relations one night during the extended battle of Yericho.

The *Gemara* further supports the idea that Yehoshua had no descendants by pointing to *Divrei HaYamim* (I 7:27), where his lineage is traced — Elishama (his grandfather), Nun (his father), and Yehoshua — but no children are listed after him. The implication is that Yehoshua did not produce children.

PESACHIM

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 119b) discusses what will happen in the future at the great meal for the righteous people. There will be a debate over who gets to lead *Birchas Hamazon*. Avraham will say that he cannot lead because Yishmael was his

child. It then goes through several options, including Yehoshua's refusal: "I cannot lead for I did not merit a so (בן)". Some versions have Yehoshua stating, "I cannot lead for I did not merit a child (זרע)."

ARIZAL

The Klausenberger Rebbe (*Shefa Chaim* 19 page 201) cites the *Arizal*, who states that sometimes a soul is sent to this world for a specific *tikkun* (rectification), but since it does not truly belong to that generation, it cannot produce children. Children create a deep and lasting connection to that generation.

The Rebbe uses the *Arizal* to explain why Yehoshua didn't have children. It is because Yehoshua did not belong to the generation of people entering Eretz Yisrael, but rather with the previous generation of the desert, who were on a higher spiritual level. Because he was spiritually "out of place," although his mission required that he live, he did not have children.

MEGILLAH

Until now, many sources indicate that

Yehoshua had no children. However, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 14b) states that eight prophets descended from Rachav, who married Yehoshua. If so, the *Gemara* asks: Why doesn't *Divrei Hayamim* list any children for Yehoshua?

The *Gemara* answers that the *pessukim* are only listing sons, and Yehoshua and Rachav only had daughters!

Many commentators note that this *Gemara* contradicts the *Gemara* in *Eiruvim* and seek to resolve the contradiction. They explain that all the above sources simply mean that Yehoshua had no **sons**, though he did have **daughters**.

This is directly relevant to the original *passuk* and the Chizkuni's answer: "But My servant Kalev... his offspring shall inherit it." (*Bamidbar* 14:24)

If Yehoshua had daughters, wouldn't they become his inheritors?

יהושע בן נון

Yehoshua, the son of Nun, (born Hoshea) lived 110 years (*Yehoshua* 24:29). His soul was connected to Yosef, the son of Yaakov (*Rama Mipano, Maharam Poperoish*). There is a Kabbalistic mystical story regarding his relationship with his father recorded by Rav Avraham, the son of the Vilna Gaon (see footnote¹). He was the second link in the *Mesorah* (*Avos* 1:1). Because he loved to learn, Hashem blessed him never to forget any of his Torah learning (*Menachos* 99b). Among his many miracles were the splitting of the Yarden River, conquering Yericho, and stopping the sun from its path. He authored the second *brachah* of *Birchas Hamazon* and *Aleinu*. The *Gemara* (*Baba Kama* 80b) discusses the 10 enactments he instituted for inheriting Eretz Yisrael. He was either a *Shofet* (which might require one to have children; See *Rambam Sanhedrin* 2:3) or a King (see *Rambam Melachim* 1:3). Sadly, Yehoshua was not properly eulogized (*Shabbos* 105b).

1 בהקדמה לספר רב פעלים. כתב הגאון המקובל האלקי מו"ה נתן נטע שמצא בשם מדרש טעם מה שנקרא יהושע בן נון, והמרגלים קראו אותו דין ריש קטיעא. שאביו של יהושע דר בירושלים ואשתו עקרה והיה הצדיק מתפלל לנכח אשתו ויעתר לו' יהי כי הרתה היה הצדיק מתענה ובוכה יום ולילה מאין הפוגות וירע הדבר בעיני אשתו ותאמר לו היה לך לשמוח כי שמע ה' את תפלתך ולא ענה אליה ויהי בדברה אליו יום יום ותאלצהו בדבריה, ויגד לה את כל לבו: כי הגידו לו משמי מרום, כי הבן הזה הולד לו יתיז את ראשו. והאמינה לדבריו, כי ידעה, כי כל דבריו באמונה. ויהי כאשר ילדה והנה הוא בן, ותקח לו אמו תיבה ותחמרה בחמר ובזפת ותשם בה את הילד ותשלך אותו בתוך היאור. וימן ה' דג גדול לבלוע את התיבה. ויהי היום, ויעש המלך משתה לכל שריו ועבדיו. וילכד את הדג, שבלע התיבה ויביאה לפני המלך, וישענהו, והנה נער בוכה. ויתמחו המלך וכל שריו, ויאמר המלך להביא אשה להיניק את הילד. ויגדל הנער בבית המלך ויפקד אותו להיות סנדטור [תליון, שר הטבחים]. ויהי אחר הדברים האלה, חטא אותו הצדיק אביו למלך מצרים, ויצא המלך להסנדטור, לחרוך את ראשו וליקח את אשתו ובניו ורכשו לעצמו כמשפטם בעת ההיא. ויהי כאשר קרב אל אמו לבוא עליה, אז נתמלאה כל המיטה חלב מדדיה. ויחדר חרדה גדולה מאד, ויטול את חניתו להרגה, באמר, כי מכשפה היא. ותזכור אמו את דברי אביו הצדיק וזכרונו לברכה, אף היא תשיב אמריה לו: "אין זה כישוף כי אם חלב שהיניקו אותך, מפני שאני אמר". וסיפרה לו כל המאורע. מיד בדל עצמו ממנה, כי גם הוא נזכר שמועתו, שנמצא בדג. אפס לא ידע, כי היה אביו; ועשה תשובה. ולכן קראו אותו 'בן נון', מפני שנמצא בדג, ובלשון ארמי 'נון'. וריש קטיעא קראו אותו והמרגלים, על שם מעשיו הראשונים, מה שעשה לאביו.