

# "I HAVE MORE THAN MY SHARE"

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 79, The Yissocher-Zevulun Partnership. Good Shabbos!*

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## The Essence of a Jew: "I Have More Than My Share"

In this week's Parsha, the blessing given to Yehuda reads, [Bereishis 49:8] "Yehuda -- your brothers will praise you..." (yoducha achecha). This is the simple translation of the verse, that the word 'yoducha' comes from 'l-hodos,' meaning to thank or to give honor.

However, the Daas Zekeinim m'baalei HaTosfos bring an alternative interpretation of these words. They say that the blessing of Yaakov was that "All Jews will be called after your name" -- i.e. Jews (Yehudim) from Judah (Yehuda).

As we all know, this is true in many languages. The name for Jew in German, which unfortunately was rubbed in our faces, is Jud -- from Judah. The name 'Yid', is from Yehuda. The name 'Jew' is from Judah, as well.

The question, however, is: why? What is it about the name Yehuda, and the nature of this name, that it should be chosen to define what the essence of a Jew is for all eternity?

If we look in Parshas Vayetze [29:35] when the children were born, we find, "she conceived again and bore a son and declared 'This time let me gratefully praise Hashem (O-deh es Hashem),' therefore she called his name Yehuda..." [from the same root as O-deh].

Rash"i asks, "What does Leah mean, 'let me praise Hashem'?" He explains that she received more than her "fair" allotment of sons. If the Twelve Tribes were destined to descend from four Matriarchs, based on an equal share basis each mother would have had 3 sons. Leah, who was already the mother of Reuvein, Shimeon, and Levi said that with the birth of Yehudah, "I now have more than my share."

The Chidushei HaRim says that the statement, "I have taken more than my share," sums up the Jewish attitude to life. "I have more than I deserve" is the essence of what a Jew is supposed to be.

That is why we are called by the name Yehuda.

Esav said "I have a lot" [33:9]. That means there is always more to have. The philosophy of Yaakov is "I have everything" [33:11]. If one has everything, there is nothing more to have. This is to be the Jewish philosophy -- I have more than I deserve; I don't deserve even this. That is why we are called by the name Yehuda.

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### **Don't Violate the Torah to Keep The Torah: Ends Don't Justify Means**

The blessing to Yehuda continues: "The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda..." [49:10]. The Rambam says that the intent of this verse is that monarchy shall not pass from Yehuda to any of his brothers. All rulership in Israel must stem from Yehuda.

The Rambam adds a frightening and unbelievable elaboration: "This was the reason for the punishment of the Chashmoneans who ruled in the time of the Second Temple." The Chashmoneans, who were Kohanim, but who ultimately assumed the Monarchy, were guilty of violating Yaakov's decree of "The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda."

The Rambam says about the Chashmoneans, "They were most elevated and righteous (Chasidei Elyon) and if not for them, Torah and Mitzvos would have been forgotten from Israel." And yet, he says that their punishment for violating this decree was great -- to the extent that the Talmud says, [Bava Basra 3b] "whoever says 'I descend from the House of the Chashmoneans' is a slave." All descendants of this great family were killed. They have no remnant among us today.

Rav Simcha Zissel says that this Rambam teaches us a lesson that we so often forget: Never, ever, do the ends justify the means.

Even though the Chashmoneans were righteous and what they did was noble; even though they saved the Beis HaMikdash and saved Torah; even though the Monarchy was thrust upon them and they were well-intended, even though they violated the Torah for the best of reasons and the best of intentions... it doesn't make a difference! One must never violate the Torah to keep the Torah.

One can have the most noble calculations and reasons in the world, but the lesson we see is "Don't break the Torah to 'keep' the Torah." We don't have the right to do that. The ends never justify the means.

They were right in rededicating the Beis HaMikdash. They were right in what they did. But they went too far. Did they do it with bad intent? G-d forbid. Did they do it for their own self-aggrandizement? Chas V'sholom. But they transgressed "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah." The consequences of that are always bad.

How many times are we faced, again and again, with this situation? The big picture is good. We are

going to accomplish so much by doing it. So we have to transgress something 'small.' We have to violate some 'little' halacha, for the 'big picture,' for the 'bottom line.'

Never! This is what the Ramba"n is saying. The Chashmoneans were wiped out because they violated "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah."

This is a lesson which we have to review again and again, because so many times and in so many situations it is so difficult to accept. It seems so worthwhile... It seems so right... But that is the rule -- Don't violate the Torah to keep the Torah.

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### **A Request of Mercy: Bring Sickness Into the World**

We hear, unfortunately all too frequently, of tragedies where airliners suddenly explode in the sky. In discussing such a tragedy, I once heard a woman on a radio talk show express a thought which she felt was semi- consoling in the midst of the great misfortune.

"Thank G-d they didn't know what hit them. A bomb goes off at 31,000 feet, one doesn't have a chance to think. One is just dead. They died without pain or anguish. They didn't think 'I am going to die'. They were spared from that trauma."

I want to suggest that this is not a proper attitude. I want to bring as a proof from a Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer on this week's parsha.

On the verse "Behold your father is sick" [48:1] the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer comments, that from the time the world was created until Yaakov, no one ever got sick and died. A person would be fit as a fiddle until one day, all of a sudden, he would sneeze and his soul would depart through his nostrils.

Regarding this situation, Yaakov our Patriarch came and asked 'Mercy from G-d' that people should get sick, so that they would have an inkling that death was approaching: "Please do not take away my soul until I have a chance to command my children and my household."

Yaakov told G-d, "I want to get my house in order; I want to get my own thoughts in order; I want to talk to my children."

And G-d responded, as it is written, "Behold your father is sick." This was a condition about which all of humanity was amazed, since nothing like this had ever happened since the creation of Heaven and Earth.

What we see from this Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is that it is not good to just die without warning, and to be suddenly taken from this world. People need time to put their own thoughts in order and to put their houses in order. They need time with their children. They need time with their spouses.

As much as we suffer from disease, at least we have a warning -- and that is a blessing. People who

die 'without knowing what hit them,' are not 'fortunate,' they are 'deprived.'

'Wisdom Among the Gentiles should be believed' [Eicha Rabba -- 2:9]. After the Challenger disaster, there was a tumult as to whether the astronauts did or did not know of their pending doom. When they finally found the tapes and heard that their last words were "Uh-oh,!" their lawyers wanted to sue N.A.S.A. because they suffered 'extra trauma,' because they 'knew.'

A non-Jewish columnist wrote, at that time, "Does it necessarily follow that it would have been more merciful that death come so instantaneously that the final conscious emotion was a sense of exhilaration, or does such an end rob a person of the right to reflect, even if only for a few precious moments, on those things that made life worth living."

I think that it's true. A person needs time. He needs time to do Teshuva [return to HaShem]. He needs time to make peace -- if with no one else, then at least with his Creator. We need time. That is what the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer is saying. Let it be a moment, but we need time.

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## Vocabulary

**hashkafa** -- outlook (on life)

**Chas v'Sholom** -- Heaven forbid (Sholom being one of G-d's Attributes)

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## Personalities & Sources:

**Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos** -- Collection of comments on Chumash by the Tosafists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (France/Germany).

**Rash"i** -- R. Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105); Father of all Torah Commentaries; France.

**Chidushei HaRim** -- R. Yitzchak Meir of Ger (1799-1866), founder of Ger Chassidism; Poland.

**Ramba"n** -- R. Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270); Gerona, Spain; Israel.

**R. Simcha Zissel Ziv** -- (1824-1898) "The Alter from Kelm"; disciple of R. Yisrael Salanter; head of a famous Mussar Yeshiva, the Talmud Torah of Kelm, Lithuania.

**Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer** -- Midrash composed by the school of the Tanna R' Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 100). An important commentary on this midrash was composed by R. Dovid Luria (1798-1855); Russia.

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