



## "EPHRAIM'S SPECIAL SERVICE, ABOVE AND BEYOND"

**Farbrenge – 13 Tishrei, 5741-1980**

*When Jacob blessed his grandchildren Efraim & Menashe, he placed his right hand on Efraim, although he was younger. Joseph commented about this, to which Jacob replied: "His younger brother shall be greater than he."*

The name Ephraim was given to imply "fruitfulness in the land." This is an expression of greatness, as the verse says, Ephraim "will be greater than" Menashe. Menashe's name, on the other hand, suggests the need to forget: Forget what? A negative event: "G-d has made me forget all my hardships."

Here we have two perceptions which produce two styles of conduct. The first style is one of "fruitfulness": Isaac was told "dwell in this land." He lived his entire life in the Holy Land, yet even there he was considered to be a "temporary dweller" —for it, too, was considered exile. Even so, however, when he had a dispute with Avimelech's herdsmen, Isaac was able to "be fruitful in the land."

This same approach later allowed Joseph—even in a true exile, and "Any country outside of Israel can be called Egypt" and in Egypt itself he could say, "G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." He does mention "the land of my affliction," a negative situation. But in the name itself there is no allusion to the negative. The name is Ephraim —"G-d has made me fruitful."

What does this mean? That even in exile his manner was, "G-d has made me fruitful," and "we will be fruitful in the land." Fruitfulness brooks no limit. When can one be truly "fruitful?" When he is unrestricted by any limitations or boundaries. Ephraim is thus not merely greater than the average person.

Menashe was also great: "I know my son... he too shall become great." Yet, Ephraim "shall become greater than him"; he is even greater than a great person, greater than his own elder brother, the firstborn. This was later expressed when the flag under which Menashe marched was that of Ephraim.

Similarly, there were many other aspects in which Ephraim exhibited the qualities of "above and beyond" "we will be fruitful in the land" and "G-d has made me fruitful," even "in the land of my affliction."

There is, however, also a second style which would seem to take precedence, just as Menashe was born before Ephraim. This behavior is expressed as "G-d has made me forget all my hardships and all of my father's household." In other words, there is something that is



oppressive, that we wish to forget; yet, G-d helps us to forget it, to persevere and accomplish everything that a Jew should.

However, when asked for his name, he replies: "My name suggests something which must be forgotten." This mode of behavior is not one of rising above all obstacles, but rather attempting to get through the problem. Only if that doesn't work will he seek within his soul and wait for a strength to be born within him to act as Ephraim. This is in contrast with Ephraim's behavior.

This is why Moshe's blessing to Joseph — after the preface "blessed by G-d is his land," a greater blessing than all other portions in the Land of Israel— concludes by saying that this applies to "the myriads of Ephraim" and the "thousands of Menashe." It highlights the fact that Ephraim expresses itself through "myriads," while Menashe is described as "thousands."

The word "myriad" is generally understood in Torah as ten thousand. But it is also interpreted as much more than ten thousand. As mentioned earlier, the greatest number is still finite. 'Many' is more than any number you may choose.

This is true with regard to each Jew and to all Jews: They are compared to "the sand of the sea" and "the stars of the heavens." Both of those are created entities; thus, they must each have a finite number.

True, it is a huge number. Yet, it is a number. Rabbi Gamliel said that he could estimate the number of drops in the sea. It is an enormously large number. But he is able to "estimate" —to set a finite number. He cannot merely say that there are "many," for that would not be setting a specific amount. However, we are also given an element of infinity.

The third blessing is that in addition to being "like the sand and the stars," they "cannot be counted because of their abundance"; they cannot be counted altogether, for they are "many" —beyond the limitations of finite numbers.

