



# *Matot-Masei*

## **Why was a whole tribe split in two?**

At the end of the book of Bemidbar, we're told the fascinating details of how two and a half tribes, Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe, requested special permission to live east of the River Jordan, outside of the borders of the Holy Land.

Now, Reuven and Gad were whole tribes, they wanted to stay together in one place, they were pastoralists, they needed suitable land for their cattle to graze on, it made a lot of sense.

But how come, half the tribe of Menashe was with them and half remained in the Holy Land?

If you study the text carefully, you will see that it was actually Moshe who decided that Menashe should be split in two.

And the Degel Machane Ephraim gives a wonderful Peirush.

He says as follows: Moshe was worried, because with two tribes geographically distanced from the rest of the people, there was the possibility that they would attain their own national identity and that would be disastrous, because it would be the end of the unity of the Jewish people.

Consequently Moshe created a bridge, the tribe of Menashe was to be that bridge, half in the Holy Land, half outside of it and they would be travelling backwards and forwards

all the time and as a result, the nation would be kept together.

We're currently continuing to endure a very tragic war, and it is so comforting to see the unity of the Jewish people inside Israel and throughout the world.

It is of such crucial importance for us now to maintain that achdut, that sense of Jewish unity.

We need to strengthen the bridges that exist in Israel and between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora, in order to guarantee that, while sometimes we might have different points of view, nonetheless, we need to respect each other and the views that other people have.

It is from Moshe in our Parsha that we learn, that it is from the unity of the Jewish people that we will achieve the strength of the Jewish people.

Shabbat Shalom.