



Men are from Sinai, Women are from the Land of Israel

וְתִקְרְבֵנָהּ בְּנוֹת צִלְפָּחֵד בֶּן חִפֹּר בֶּן גִּלְעָד בֶּן מַכִּיר בֶּן
מִנְשֵׁה לְמִשְׁפַּחַת מִנְשֵׁה בֶּן יוֹסֵף וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֹתָיו מִחֵלָה
נָעָה וְחַגְלָה וּמִלְכָּה וְתִרְזָה.

And the daughters of Tzelafchad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph, came forward, and his daughters' names were **Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.** (*Bamidbar 27:1*)

In his hugely popular book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, John Gray claimed that men and women come from completely different planets. I am not so sure that the differences are so extreme, but in this *parsha* we come across one issue in which men and women showed totally contrasting attitudes.

Tzelafchad's five daughters come to Moshe and ask to receive their portion of land as an inheritance in the Land of Israel: "Give us a portion along with our father's brothers." Moshe is unsure how to answer them and asks God, who tells

him that their request is justified and they should be given a portion of land.

Rashi makes an interesting comment about the difference between men and women in the wilderness: "The women were not included in the decree enacted after the sin of the spies, for they cherished the land. The men said, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt,' but the women said, 'Give us a portion.'" The men wanted to reverse course, whereas the women pushed ahead because they loved the Land of Israel. As a result, for the forty years following the sin of the spies, all the men of that generation died in the wilderness, while the women, the elderly and widowed women who loved the land, merited to enter it.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz, known as the *Kli Yakar*, writes an even more radical commentary. He claims that the reason the spies failed in their mission is because they were men, and that if women had been sent they would have come back and given an optimistic report about the Land of Israel. Four hundred years ago, the *Kli Yakar* wrote that "the men hated the land and the women cherished it, so God said, 'In My opinion it would have been better to send women who cherish the land and would not speak badly about it.'"

The sin of the spies might have been averted if female spies had been sent. ■