

ספר יהושע - פרק ד

שְׂאוּ-לָכֶם מִזֶּה מִתּוֹךְ הַיָּרְדֵּן שְׁתֵּים-עָשָׂר אַבְנִים

1. ה' told יְהוֹשֻׁעַ to choose twelve men-one from each שִׁבְט. Once all of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל crossed over, the twelve men were to go back onto the river bed and pick up twelve stones from under the כֹּהֲנִים's feet. They were to bring these stones into the Land and build a monument to write parts of the Torah on them in 70 languages. This was for the world to see the miracle ה' performed by splitting the יַרְדֵּן. ה' already prepared the stones, they would not have to dig them up. Even though they were huge stones they were able to carry them. The stones were also a witness to their children and grandchildren who would one day be curious and ask why the stones are there.

ה' didn't have to perform these great miracles but He wanted the experience to be indelibly engraved upon their memories for all generations.

The people could have waded quietly across the יַרְדֵּן river in a natural way. But ה' wanted it to be AMAZING.

That's why the 12 men had to GO BACK IN. Once everybody finished crossing, everybody would take notice of the people going back in. It wasn't like 'Oh do me a favor, while your crossing, it's on your way, pick up some stones'. They risked their lives going back. They had no idea when the waters would come crashing down. ה' also made a נֶס that they could carry such heavy stones.

Everybody watched and it was an experience that could not be easily forgotten.

2. גִּלְגַּל was where the monument was built because that was to be the camp of the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל during the years of conquest. The מִשְׁכָּן would also be there before it was erected in שִׁילָה. Only some of the people would go out and fight, the rest would remain in גִּלְגַּל--they were the majority.

The monument needed to be easily visible because there was a great danger that they would forget that it was only in the merit of תּוֹרָה and מִצְוֹת that

they had conquered the land. Only through continual faithfulness to 'ה and to His תורה would they be worthy of remaining there. They could not do as they please and feel secure. If they did whatever they wanted, the land would be conquered from right under them.

3. Why did 'ה choose to memorialize the miracles by a monument of 12 stones? When יַעֲקֹב was running away from his brother, the midrash tells us that he stopped to sleep on הַר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. He found the מִזְבֵּחַ Avraham used to sacrifice the ram instead of יִצְחָק. He took 12 stones from it and put them around his head to protect himself from wild animals. Miraculously, during the night, the 12 stones melded together to become one solid rock. This was a prediction that he would one day have 12 sons who would one day be the fathers of the 12 שְׁבֵטִים. They would be strong and hard as stones. They would fight bravely and conquer אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן. The message was that the 12 tribes would only be strong if they were united. As long as they lived together in peace they would be able to stand up to their enemies and defend their land. But if they would argue and fight amongst themselves they would become divided, and their enemies would conquer them and they would be exiled.

Therefore 'ה commanded יְהֹשֻׁעַ to take 12 stones for the 12 שְׁבֵטִים and build them together into a מִזְבֵּחַ. The 12 stones were all equal in size and weight, just as each of the שְׁבֵטִים played an equally important role in the eyes of 'ה.

4. יְהֹשֻׁעַ also erected a twelve stone monument in the middle of the יַרְדֵּן, they protruded above the water, so that in case future generations would forget what the monument on land was, they would see two sets of 12 stones opposite each other and know it was no coincidence. They will remember that this is the place 'ה made the miracle for בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל while they crossed the יַרְדֵּן. יְהֹשֻׁעַ erected the stones himself to show he didn't want to belittle the 12 great leaders even though they were all not accustomed to doing manual labor.