

THE FUTURE COMES FIRST

by Rabbi Dovid Green

In this week's parsha we learn of the request of the tribes of Reuvain and Gad to make their homes in the Transjordan. Moshe asked them: "Will your bretheren go to war (across the Jordan to conquer the land) while you remain here?" (Numbers 32:6) The two tribes quickly reassured him by replying, "We will build sheepfolds for our cattle and cities for our little ones here, but we ourselves will be armed to go before the Children of Israel until we have brought them to their place." (ibid 32:16)

Moshe was pleased to hear their declaration of unity with the other tribes, yet he needed to set them straight on two points. They had mentioned that they would prepare the habitat for their sheep before the housing for their children, and they had neglected to acknowledge G-d's role in the upcoming conquest of the land of Canaan.

His reply to the tribes of Reuvain and Gad was the following therefore: "Build your cities **for your little ones**, (ibid 32:24) and folds for your sheep". Having put that in order he then said: "And arm yourselves to go before G-d to the war" (ibid 32:27) thus putting the war into proper perspective as well.

Realizing their error we see that they quickly adjusted their terminology, adapting Moshe's perspective as their own when they said: "Our little ones, our wives, our flocks and all our cattle"-in that order, "shall be there" (in Transjordan) but your servants will pass over (to Canaan) every man armed for war before G-d to the battle." (ibid 32:26,27)

In *Lilmod U'lilamed a meaningful story is retold to illustrate the Torah's priorities regarding children and their future, putting their material and spiritual needs before one's own material needs.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter (19th century) once made a very strong point to the people of a certain town in Europe. They were lacking in their responsibility in seeing to the educational needs of a local orphan. Instead of attending the local cheder he could be seen roaming the streets. The people apologized, excusing themselves by explaining that the community charity funds had all been used up. No money, it seemed, was available to help the orphan. "You must then sell a Torah scroll in order to pay his tuition!" came the startling reply of the Rav.

So great is the obligation to strengthen Torah education, thereby helping future generations to fulfill their destiny as Jews. The student of Torah knows that only through the continuation of Torah education for our young do we stand a chance to pass on the essence of what binds us as one. May

we all merit to establish a Jewish "dynasty" of our own. Good Shabbos.

**Lilmode U'lilamade ("to learn and to teach") published by J.E.P., the Jewish education Program. It contains summaries and explanations on the weekly portion in English. It is available through Project Genesis at <http://books.torah.org/>*

Good Shabbos!

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