

TO DEFEND OTHERS

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

In this week's parashah we learn about the request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad for a portion of land on the east side of the Jordan River. It is said (Bamidbar 32:1) *umikneh rav hayah livnei Reuven vilivnei Gad atzum meod vayiru es eretz Yaazer vies eretz Gilead vihinei hamakom makom mikneh*, the children of Reuven and the children of Gad had abundant livestock - very great. They saw the land of Yaazer and the land of Gilead, and behold! - the place was a place for livestock. The Torah continues to record how these two tribes requested from Moshe that they recite this land and in this manner they would not have to settle in Eretz Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan River.

One who reads this passage in the Torah should be confounded at what appears to be the audaciousness of these two tribes. The Jewish People, after sojourning in Eretz Yisroel for forty years, were finally ready to enter into Eretz Yisroel. At this critical juncture in Jewish history, the tribes of Reuven and Gad seemed to have taken a left turn and abandoned the ideal of living in Eretz Yisroel. Moshe chastises the two tribes for appearing to abandon the Jewish People, similar to what the spies did thirty-nine years earlier. The two tribes therefore agreed to build pens for their flock and cities for their small children. They would then assist the Jewish People in battle until the nation had settled on the west side of the Jordan, and the two tribes would take their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan.

I have always been troubled by this response. Moshe was concerned that were the two tribes to inherit on the east side of the Jordan, this would cause the Jewish People to become disheartened as they did when the spies brought back a slanderous report regarding the Land. How, then, did the tribes of Reuven and Gad alleviate Moshe's concern? Although the answer to this question may be obvious, there is an important lesson to be gained from the response of the tribes of Reuven and Gad. They told Moshe that they would not return to their homes until the Jewish People inherited their inheritance. They would send every armed person to do battle and only then would they feel comfortable enough to settle on the east side of the Jordan River. Thus, in essence the tribes of Reuven and Gad were willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the Jewish People inheriting the Land. The two tribes were demonstrating to Moshe that he did not have to be concerned that the Jewish People would become disheartened because of the fact that the two tribes would be settling on the east side of the Jordan River. In fact, by willing to fight on behalf of the Jewish People, they were demonstrating that they were willing to sacrifice their very lives so that the Jewish People would settle on the west side of the Jordan River. This idea can be applied to our observance of Shabbos. It is easy for a person to keep occupied during the week and then enter into Shabbos and

cease from working. The preferred approach, however, is that one prepare himself during the week with the understanding that in this manner he will see blessing during the week. One must in a sense sacrifice his mode of casualness for the sanctity of Shabbos. When one sacrifices for Shabbos, he can be assured that he will inherit a boundless heritage, which will be the day that is completely Shabbos, and a rest day for eternal life.

Shabbos in the Zemiro

Askinu Seudasa Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria

Azamer bishevachin limeial go pischin divachakal tapuchin diinun kadishin, I will cut away the accusers with praises, bringing them up through the portals that are in the Apple Orchard, for they are holy. What is the association between the word zemer, singing, and zemor, cutting away? It would seem that when one offers praise to HaShem, he is removing all the evil forces that threaten to dishearten a person in his service of HaShem.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 92b) states that Nevuchadnezzar was singing the praises of HaShem and he almost reached a point where he would have put Dovid HaMelech's praises to shame. An angel then came and struck Nevuchadnezzar on his mouth, thus preventing him from continuing to sing Hashem's praises. Perhaps the explanation of this Gemara is that elsewhere (Ibid 96b) the Gemara states that HaShem was prepared to accept the conversion of the descendants of Nevuchadnezzar, and the ministering angels rejected the request. The angels declared, "Master of the World! Will you allow the one who destroyed Your Bais HaMikdash to enter under the wings of the Divine Presence?" Thus, we see that one who causes destruction in an area of sanctity is not permitted to come close to HaShem and subsequently to sing HaShem's praises. Dovid HaMelech greatly desired to build the Bais HaMikdash, so his praises were accepted by HaShem. Nevuchadnezzar, on the other hand, destroyed the Bais HaMikdash, and he was not allowed to praise HaShem. Thus, the association between zemer, song, and zemor, cutting away, reflects the concept of *davar vihipucho*, a matter and its opposite. One who cuts away at matters of sanctity cannot praise HaShem, whereas one who strives to lead a life of sanctity and seeks the building of the Bais HaMikdash merits praising HaShem for eternity.

Shabbos in Tefillah

Mileim ziv umifikim nogah naeh zivam bichol haolam, filled with luster and radiating brightness, their luster is beautiful throughout the world. Yaakov Avinu is referred to as the *shemesh*, the sun. Perhaps this passage alludes to this idea. It is said (Bereishis 28:10) *Vayeitzei Yaakov miBeer Sheva vayeilech Charanah*, Yaakov departed from Beer-sheva and went toward Charan. Rashi (Ibid) writes that the reason why the Torah states that Yaakov left Beer-sheva is to teach us that as long as the righteous person is in the city, he is its glory, splendor, and majesty. When the righteous person departs from the city, these virtues are lost. Thus we see that Yaakov is referred to as *ziv*, the shine of the city. It is therefore appropriate that here we describe the sun, i.e. Yaakov, as filled with luster

and radiating brightness.

Shabbos Story

Rav Eliezer Gordon was born in 5601/1841 in the Lithuanian village of Chernian. His father, Rav Avraham Shmuel Gordon, had studied under Rav Chaim of Volozhin. Although Rav Avraham earned his living as a brandy maker, he spent every moment of his spare time studying Torah. Rav Chaim, who held him in high esteem, would often tell his students that although Rav Avraham looked like a simple tradesman, he was actually an outstanding talmid chacham. Since there was no mohel in Chernian, Rav Avraham Shmuel took his newborn son by sleigh to the nearby town of Svir for his bris. On the way, the sleigh suddenly slipped, and the infant fell out. The family, however, only realized what had happened once they had traveled quite a distance. Turning back, they began to search for the baby, finding him hours later at the outskirts of the forest between Chernian and Svir. They panicked when they saw a wolf standing beside him. But upon closer inspection, they realized the wolf hadn't harmed him; rather, it was guarding him. Obviously, the wolf had been sent by Shamayim to protect the baby, who soon had his bris and was named Eliezer.

During a condolence visit to Rabbi Berel Wein, a distinguished member of the Ohr Somayach faculty, who was sitting shiva for his late father, o.b.m., this noted Torah scholar and historian told a story of a visit his father made back in 1930 to the leader of Lithuanian Jewry, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky. The head of the yeshiva he was studying at in Grodna, Rabbi Shimon Shkop, had sent him to solicit financial assistance from the Yeshiva Fund in order to save the yeshiva students from starvation. One story about Rabbi Chaim Ozer led to another. Rabbi Wein once asked a high-ranking official in the Israeli Ministry of Education how it was that a pronounced secularist like him was so helpful to Torah institutions. His response was a recollection of something that took place half a century before. At that time he was head of the Jewish socialist organization in the University of Vilna. One day he received a surprise visit from a messenger who informed him that Rabbi Chaim Ozer wished to see him. When he arrived he was warmly greeted by the rabbi who invited him to join him in some cake and tea. I will make the beracha, he said to his secular guest, and all you have to do is say Amen. He then got to the point. Pesach is drawing near and there are many hundreds of Jewish students in the university who will not be at a Pesach Seder. If I make a Seder for these irreligious students hardly anyone will come. But if you, as head of the socialists make one, you will get a big crowd. I will supply you with all the money you need to see that everyone who wishes to be at the Seder will have matzah and maror and four cups of wine. There were a thousand students at that Seder, the official concluded his story, so now you know that the money I am channeling to yeshiva is really coming from Rabbi Chaim Ozer.

Shabbos in Navi

Shmuel I Chapter 1

In this chapter we learn about a man named Elkanah from the tribe of Levi who had two wives,

Chanah and Peninah. Peninah was blessed with children, whereas Chanah did not have children. Peninah caused Chanah much anguish over the fact that she did not have children. Elkanah and his family would ascend yearly to the Mishkan in Shiloh, and after one such pilgrimage, Chanah prayed to HaShem, begging Him to give her a child. Eli the Kohen assumed she was drunk, whereupon Chanah informed Eli that she was not drunk. Rather, she was a woman of aggrieved spirit and she had poured out her soul before HaShem. Eli blessed her to have a child and Chanah gave birth to Shmuel. The Medrash (Medrash Shmuel 1) states that Elkanah would take a different route up to Shiloh every year, in order to encourage the Jewish People to make the pilgrimage on the Three Festivals. This idea is a lesson for us regarding our preparations for Shabbos. One should always seek out new methods of preparation for Shabbos so that the observance of Shabbos does not become habitual.

Shabbos in Agadah

The Sfas Emes (Yisro 5638) writes that by remembering the Shabbos, one adds sanctity to the Shabbos. The root of Shabbos is in a very high place. Nonetheless, the Jewish People guard themselves during the week from any contamination and evil so that they will be prepared to accept the Shabbos in a state of purity. In this manner we can draw the root of holiness to Shabbos in this world.

Shabbos in Halacha

In summary, it is proper and advisable that all foods be completely cooked prior to the onset of Shabbos, and one should maintain the food only on a flame that is covered by a blech. Nonetheless, the absolute requirement of the Halacha is that one use a blech for foods that are less than half cooked (in case of necessity: one-third cooked), and for liquids that are below 160°F at the onset of Shabbos. A piece of raw meat can be placed in a crockpot immediately prior to the onset of Shabbos to exempt the pot from requiring a blech.

Shabbos in Numbers and Words

Shabbos is referred to as *yom chemdaso*, the day of Hashem's delight. The word chamad, desire, in mispar katan, digit sum, equals 7 (Ches is 8, mem is 40 which is 4, and dalet is 4. $8+4+4=16$, and $1+6=7$). This alludes to Shabbos, the seventh day of the week.

Text Copyright © 2008 by Binyomin Adler and [Torah.org](https://torah.org)