

Weekly Teaching

February 16, 2018



As we reach the concluding days of our Shalom Center's Interfaith mission to Israel, I prepare to lead our group into Jordan to visit Petra, often referred to as one of the modern-day seven wonders in the world today.

When I cross over into Jordan, and look back at Israel, I recall the conversation that took place between Moses and the tribes of Reuben and Gad who wished to stay on the other side of the Jordan to permanently reside instead of entering the land of Israel, because they felt the land was especially good for their animals' ability to graze.

- *There were farm animals galore belonging to the sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; a tremendous number; and, they saw the land of Etzar and the land of Gilad; and, here the place was a place for grazing. And the sons of Gad and sons of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, and Elazar the priest, and the leaders of the community, saying: "The country the Lord struck before the community of Israel is for livestock, and your servants have livestock." And they further said, "If we've found favor in your eyes, Let this land be given to your servants as an estate; don't cross us over the Jordan."*

Moses told the tribes of Reuben and Gad:

- *"Are your brothers coming to war and you'll settle here? Why do you stir the hearts of the children of Israel from crossing over to the land the Lord gave them?"*

Moses seemingly had no intention of letting the tribes of Reuben and Gad stay outside the land of Israel.

But, then they said to Moses:

- *"We'll build pens for our sheep here, and cities for our children. And we'll swiftly trail-blaze ahead of the children of Israel until we bring them to their places while our children settle in cities fortified against the dwellers in the land. We won't return to our homes until each son of Israel has inherited his inheritance. But, we won't inherit with them over the Jordan and beyond, for our inheritance will have come to us on the eastern bank of the Jordan."*

Moses then said to them:

- *"If you fulfill this speech; if you trail-blaze before the Lord to the war, and every trail-blazer of you crosses the Jordan before God until He lets you inherit His enemies before Him. And, when the land is conquered before the Lord, and after that you return; then you'll be clear of the Lord and of Israel, and this land will be yours as an estate before God. But, if you don't do so, here you've sinned before God and know that your sin will find you out. Build yourselves cities for your children and pens for your sheep, and what comes out of your mouth, follow through."*

Standing in Jordan in the 21st century, and looking across the border into Israel, I strongly feel the emotions of Reuben and Gad.

I'm a product of a blessed exilic experience in America and love the land of Israel; I wish to visit often and for long periods of time, but don't wish to permanently reside in Israel as America is my home.

I hear Moses' charge that I must "follow through" and that I am a "trail-blazer" for Israel to assure, with my time and resources, that Israel can be the safe and secure haven for the Jewish People.

After Jordan, I will return back to our Land of Israel to spend a few days with our oldest son (who made Aliyah two years ago), and see our youngest daughter (who is studying for two months in Jerusalem with her senior Schechter class), but then I will come "home" to America.

And I will once again appreciate both the blessings of our land, a Land of abundance, and the need to "follow thorough."

In this spirit I will make the annual trek to [AIPAC'S Policy Conference](#) soon after returning home.

Perhaps you might consider joining me in fulfilling our "Reuben/Gad" mission of strong "trail-blazing" support of Israel.

Shabbat Shalom,

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