

"They came close to him and said, 'we wish to build here sheep enclosures for our sheep and cities for our children.'" (32:16) - "Build for you cities for your children and sheep enclosures for your sheep." (32:24)

Chazal describe the dialogue between Moshe and the tribes of *Bnei Gad* and *Reuven* in the following manner. First they asked for sheep enclosures. Afterward, they requested cities for their children. Moshe corrected them by saying, *"Do not turn the unimportant into the essential and the essential into the secondary. First you must provide for your children, and then for your possessions."* *Chazal* explain that their obsession with their material needs caused these tribes to be the first to be exiled.

How true this has been throughout history. As soon as there is a modest improvement in our material sustenance, we tend to neglect our most sacred treasure, the *Torah*. We have shamelessly relegated the *Torah* to an inferior status as soon as opportunity for material advancement emerges. We should realize that all advancement becomes worthless if our awareness of *Torah* values becomes sullied. If *Torah* precepts do not dominate our life, then what value does it have?

Our noblest fulfillment should be the success of having reared children *"b'derech ha'Torah,"* in the *Torah* way. Our greatest symbol of Divine trust is the ability to dedicate ourselves and our family to *Torah* first and foremost. The desire to care for the "sheep" or our material security, while relegating *Torah* education to a distant second place catalyzes in the downfall of Jewish family values and *Torah nachas*. Indeed, financial worries are justified, but we are not permitted to sacrifice our most precious *Torah* treasures in order to pursue material pleasures. The *Tanna* in *Avos 3:21* states, *"If there is no flour (referring to material security), there is no Torah."* This is indeed true, but we are not free to sacrifice *Torah* in the pursuit of "flour."