

## **The Tribes Reuven and Gad had an extremely large amount of cattle. (32:1)**

*Chazal* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 22:6) underscore the good fortune of one who acquires any one of these G-d-given precious gifts: wisdom, strength and/or wealth. This idea, say *Chazal*, applies only if one receives these gifts from Hashem. If, however, he receives these gifts from human beings – they have no value. *Chazal* continue: two wise people – one Jewish, one gentile, Achitofel and Bilaam – were both lost; two well-known strong men who did not endure – Shimshon and Golias – one Jewish, one gentile. Two men of great wealth -- Korach and Haman – neither made it. Why were these men lost? Hashem did not provide their gifts (of wisdom, strength and wealth). They snatched the gifts themselves. Likewise, the tribes of Reuven and Gad valued their wealth and large flock to such an extent, that they were inclined to settle outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. As a result, they were the first tribes to be exiled.

*Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita*, asks: We all know young men who *hor'eve*, toil, in Torah, but do not seem to succeed. Are they doing something wrong? What can we advise them? The answer, say *Chazal* (*Niddah* 70b): Keep on learning. At one point, the wellsprings of knowledge will open and they will become scholars. What if this, too, does not help? They learn and learn and nothing! They should petition the One to Whom wisdom belongs; only He can help.

*Chazal* are making us aware of terms concerning the acquisition of Torah wisdom that, due to their Divine Source, are different than conventional scholarship and its acquisition. *Chazal* tell us to study – and study again. They instruct us to pray for success. They admonish us not to snatch these gifts. How does it all mesh together? Is it possible to snatch something without Hashem providing it? Whatever happened to *emunah*/faith, and *bitachon*/trust?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* shares a powerful analogy. Most animals converge on food when it is left for them. Lions, however, have their own way of doing things. Lions wait patiently for the zookeeper to leave, and then, when they are alone, they attack the food. This is because lions are the strongest animals, the kings of the jungle. They cannot bend down to eat almost obsequiously. They must snatch and grab their food – making eating an achievement – not a necessity. They can carry on this approach to eating only once the zookeeper has left.

Likewise, *Chazal* are not intimating that one can snatch something that Hashem has not provided. He is acutely aware of everything that we do. Some people, however, even after Hashem has provided them with Divine gifts, act as if they have snatched it from Him themselves, as if it was the product of their own effort. As a result, they have the temerity to fail to acknowledge His Divine favor. Such a person is doomed to lose his gift. Torah wisdom is an awesome, Divine gift, which we must acknowledge for what it is. Learning alone will not incur achievement. It is critical that the learning be accompanied by prayer – and more prayer, recognizing the Source of the gift.