



Based on the Dvar Torah of Mrs. Mali Brofsky Parashat Devarim

This week's Parsha opens with the list of Nisiim, the leaders of the individual tribes. I'd like to talk about the name of one of the Nisiim that perhaps we don't always focus on and that is the Nasi of Shevet Gad. In Bamidbar 1:14, we are told his name **אֶלִּיָּשָׁפָן בֶּן־דֵּעִי** (For Gad, Eliasaph the son of De'uel).

Later in Naso when we're told about the Korbanot the Nasim bring during the sanctification of the Mishkan we are again told that the name of the Nasi of Shevet Gad is **אֶלִּיָּשָׁפָן בֶּן־דֵּעִי**. There is something quite interesting here. Later in our Parsha, we are told about the encampment of B'nei Yisrael and how they traveled in the Midbar. They travel according to tribes and when the tribe of Gad is mentioned, the name of the Nasi of Gad is actually changed. It's no longer **אֶלִּיָּשָׁפָן בֶּן־דֵּעִי**, but the name is changed to **אֶלִּיָּשָׁפָן בֶּן־רַעוּאֵל**. One could say that this is probably just a typical interchange of characters, of letters, and it doesn't have much significance.

However, there is actually a very beautiful Drash cited by the Imri Noam in the name of the Chida that states that **רַעוּאֵל** is actually a reference to Moshe Rabbeinu and his relationship to Shevet Gad. **רַעוּאֵל** is one of the seven names of Moshe Rabbeinu, "he who is beloved," he who is close to Hashem.

When we're talking about the encampments of the Machane of B'nei Yisrael around the Mishkan, why would we refer to Gad there as connected to Moshe Rabbeinu? In Devarim, before the death of Moshe Rabbeinu, when Moshe blesses all of the Shvatim, Rashi brings a Midrash that says that indeed Moshe Rabbeinu was buried in the Nachalah of Gad. Gad was on the other side of the Yarden, their Nachalah was not in Eretz Yisrael, and here the relationship between Moshe Rabbeinu and Gad emphasizes that there was a particularly loving relationship between Moshe Rabbeinu and Gad, and that indeed Moshe Rabbeinu was buried in Gad's land.

Why? And, why do we talk about this relationship with Moshe Rabbeinu when we're talking about the way the Shvatim traveled in the Midbar?

The key is to look at how the Shvatim traveled. If you look at the way they were encamped we have in the north Dan, Asher and Naftali. In the south, Reuven, Shimon, Gad. In the east, Yehuda, Yissacher and Zevulun, and in the west Ephraim, Menashe, Binyamin. Now, if you look at them, each one of those groups is led by one Shevet. So in the west, we have Ephraim, who is the Bechor, the firstborn or Yosef. Yosef is the firstborn of Rachel, and he's given the double portion and his chosen Bechor is Ephraim. In the south, we have Reuven who is the Bechor of Am Yisrael. In the north, we have Dan, who was the firstborn of Bilha, but what's interesting is that in the east, who should be our next leader? Who is the only firstborn who hasn't been given this leadership role? It's Gad, who was the firstborn of Zilpa. He's not given that leadership position and instead that's given to Yehuda who we know deserves that place of leadership because he is our natural leader, he's born into kingship and we see that he actualizes his potential later in Jewish history.

This means Gad actually was willing to step back and let Yehuda take his place. Gad goes with Reuven and Shimon and he doesn't take that leadership place that he could have argued that he deserved.

What's the message here and why was Gad so particularly loved by Moshe Rabbeinu?

Gad could have started a quarrel, he could have had a petty fight, he could have demanded his own honor, his own Kavod, but Gad didn't do that. Moshe Rabbeinu, who had to deal with all of Am Yisrael and their quarrels especially appreciated this quality of Gad.

Especially in times when we're in close quarters with our families, or we're in times of particular stress, this midah, character trait, of Gad is a very hard one to hold onto. Not to be irritated by small things, not to insist on things that seem extremely important to you right now, but to have that ability to step back, to have a larger perspective, to think about the greater good and to really do what's right in terms of the bigger picture.

This is a beautiful message for us, especially in times of hardship. We should all emulate this quality of Shevet Gad and have the ability to rise above our small quarrels and reach for Achdut in all of Am Yisrael and Be'ezrat Hashem may there be a Refuah Shlemah for all of Am Yisrael and for all the world very soon.

Shabbat Shalom.