

Jews in and Jews out:
The Diaspora's Relationship with the Jewish Community in Israel
A Limud of Masorti Israel -The Rav Siach program

This source sheet is meant to help frame the question, what is the nature of the relationship between Jews in the land of Israel and Jews outside of the land of Israel?

Textual Context:

The content of this source sheet centers around one primary narrative, that of the tribes of Reuven and Gad choosing to remain East of the Jordan - not in Canaan.

After nearly 40 years of wandering in the desert, the generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt died off with the exception of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. The Israelites made it to the border of Eretz Canaan and had successful military campaigns against King Og and his army, King Sihon and his army, and Midian, three Kingdoms just East of Canaan. The tribes of Reuven and Gad approach Moses and the community leaders to ask permission to live in these newly conquered lands instead of living in the land of Canaan.

Bamidbar 32:1-5 א-ה

מקנה | רב היתה לבני ראובן ולבני גד עצומים מאד ויראו את-ארץ נעור ואת-ארץ גלעד והנה המקום מקום מקנה: ויבאו בני-גד ובני ראובן ויאמרו אל-משה ואל-אלעזר הכהן ואל-נשיאי העדה לאמר: עטרות ודיבן ונעזר ונמר'ה וקשבון ואלעלה ושכם ונבו ובען: הארץ אשר הנה יהיה לפני ענת ישראל ארץ מקנה הוא ולעבדי מקנה: ויאמרו אם-מצאנו חן בעיניך ילן את-הארץ הנאת לעבדיך לאחזה אל-מעברנו את-הירדן:

The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said, "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon — the land the Lord subdued before the people of Israel is suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock. If we have found favor in your eyes," they said, "let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan."

Question for Reflection:

Reuven and Gad wish to live east of Canaan but cannot do so without the permission of Moses and the community elders. **Is there pressure in our day to live in Israel? If so, where/who does it come from? Has it been different at different points in your life, or at different points in the history of the state of Israel?**

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Bamidbar 32:6-7 לב: וז

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי-גָד וְלְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן הָאֲחֵיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמִלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה:
אֶת-לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבְרֹת אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה: [תניאין] וְלָמָּה תנוואון

Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, "Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the Lord has given them?"

Question for Reflection:

Moses' underlying consideration is that the other Israelite tribes will have to go to war for the land and by not participating, Reuven and Gad will hurt the nation emotionally by opting out.

Does the relationship between Israeli Jews and diaspora Jews feel different when there is a war being fought?

Bamidbar, 32:16-18 יח-טז

וַיָּגִשׁוּ אֵלָיו בְּנֵי-רְאוּבֵן וְגָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו גְּדַרְתָּ צֶאֱן וּבָגַדָה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹה וְעָרִים לְטַפְּנוּ: וְאַנְחֵנוּ נַחֲלֵץ חֲשִׁים לְפָנֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם-הִבִּיאֲנֶם אֶל-
מְקוֹמָם וְנִשְׁבַּ טַפְּנוּ בְּעָרֵי הַמְּבָצָר מִפְּנֵי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ: לֹא נָשׁוּב אֶל-בְּתִינּוּ עַד הַתְּנַחֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ נַחֲלָתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֹשֶׁה
אִם-תַּעֲשׂוּן אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אִם-תַּחֲלֹצוּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה לְמִלְחָמָה: וְעָבַר לָכֶם כָּל-חַלּוּץ אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה עַד הוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת-אֲבֹתֵינוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ:
וְנִבְרָשָׁה הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה וְאַחַר תֵּשְׁבוּ וְהִייתֶם נְקִיִּים מִיְהוָה וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהִיְתָה הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לָכֶם לְאֻחֻזָּה לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה:

Then they came up to him and said, "We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. But we will arm ourselves for battle and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities for protection from the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance.

Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this - if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for battle and if all of you who are armed cross over the Jordan before the Lord until he has driven his enemies out before him, then when the land is subdued before the Lord, you may return and be free from your obligation to the Lord and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the Lord.

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Question for Reflection:

Reuven and Gad agree that they have an obligation to those Israelites who are attempting to possess and live in Canaan. This obligation is to fight alongside the other tribes in order to ensure their physical safety in Canaan. **Do diaspora Jews have an obligation to Jews in Israel? If so, how does it compare to the obligation Reuven and Gad had to the other tribes?**

Joshua 22:1-16, 24-27 יהושע יב: א-ט"ז

אז יקרא יהושע לראובני ולגדי ולחצי מטה מנשה: ויאמר אליהם אתם שמרתם את כל-אשר צוה אתכם משה עבד יהוה ותשמעו בקולי לכל אשר-צויתי אתכם: לא-עזבתם את-אחיהם זה ימים רבים עד היום והנה ושמרתם את-משמרת מצות יהוה אליהם: ועתה הניח יהוה אליהם לאחיהם כאשר דבר להם ועתה פנו ואלו לכם לאהליכם אל-ארץ אחוזתכם אשר נתן לכם משה עבד יהוה בעבר הירדן: רק שמרו מאד לעשות את-המצוה ואת-התורה אשר צוה אתכם משה עבד-יהוה לאהבה את-יהוה אליהם וללכת בכל-דרךיו ולשמר מצותיו ולדבקהו ולעבדו בכל-לבבכם ובכל-נפשכם: ויברכם יהושע וישלחם וילכו אל-אהליהם: הירדן גמה וגם פי שלחם יהושע אל-אהליהם [בעבר] ולחצי שבט המנשה נתן משה בפשו ויחציו נתן יהושע עם-אחיהם מעבר ויברכם: ויאמר אליהם לאמר בנכסים רבים שובו אל-אהליכם ובמקנה רבי-מאד בכסף ובזהב ובנחשת ובברזל ובשלמות הרבה מאד חלקו שלל-איביכם עם-אחיהם: וישבו וילכו בני-ראובן ובני-גד וחצי שבט המנשה מאת בני ישראל משלה אשר בארץ-כנען ללכת אל-ארץ הגלעד אל-ארץ אחזתם אשר נאחזו-בה על-פי יהוה ביד-משה: ויבאו אל-גלילות הירדן אשר בארץ כנען ויבנו בני-ראובן ובני-גד וחצי שבט המנשה שם מזבח על-הירדן מזבח גדול למראה: וישמעו בני-ישראל לאמר הנה בנו בני-ראובן ובני-גד וחצי שבט המנשה את-המזבח אל-מול ארץ כנען אל-גלילות הירדן אל-עבר בני ישראל: וישמעו בני ישראל ויקהלו כל-עדת בני-ישראל ללכת לעלות עליהם לצבא: וישלחו בני-ישראל אל-בני-ראובן ואל-בני-גד ואל-חצי שבט-מנשה אל-ארץ הגלעד את-פיניחס בן-אלעזר הכהן: ועשרה נשאים עמו נשיא אחד נשיא אחד לבית אב לכל מטות ישראל ואיש ראש בית-אבותם המה לאלפי ישראל: ויבאו אל-בני-ראובן ואל-בני-גד ואל-חצי שבט-מנשה אל-ארץ הגלעד וידברו אתם לאמר: כה אמרו כל ועדת הנהגה-המעל הזה אשר מעלתם באלהי ישראל לשוב היום מאת-רינה אחרינו לעבד את-עבדת יהוה לפניו בעלותינו ובזבחנו ובשולחנו ולא-יאמרו בניכם מחר לבנינו אינכם חלקמיהוה:

ואם-לא מדאגה מדבר-עשינו את-זאת לאמר מחר יאמרו בניכם לבנינו לאמר מה-לכם וליהוה אלהי ישראל: וגבול גתו-יהוה ביננו וביניכם בני-ראובן ובני-גד את-הירדן אינכם חלק ביהוה והשפיתו בניכם את-בנינו לבתתי ירא את-יהוה: ויאמר נעשה-גא לנו לבנות את-המזבח לא לעולה ולא לזבח: כילעד הוא בינינו וביניכם ובין-דורותינו אחרינו לעבד את-עבדת יהוה לפניו בעלותינו ובזבחנו ובשולחנו ולא-יאמרו בניכם מחר לבנינו אינכם חלקמיהוה:

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, "You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. To this very day you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord gave you. Now that the Lord has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses gave you on the other side of the Jordan. But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses gave you: to

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love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to Him, to keep His commands, to hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes. To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites. When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, saying, “Return to your homes with your great wealth - with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing - and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites.”

So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses. When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built a massive altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

The Israelites sent Pinhas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead, to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh with ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. They said to them: “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?...

...“No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? The Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the Lord.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the Lord. “That is why we said, ‘Let us build an altar, but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’ On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord.’”

Questions for Reflection:

1) After fulfilling their promise to ensure that the other Israelite tribes conquered Canaan, Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh (for whom Moses designated land outside of Israel) leave Canaan to return to their homes on the other side of the Jordan. The very first thing that happens upon separating is a huge miscommunication. Reuben and Gad build an altar as a memorial to brotherhood with the tribes of Israel. However, the tribes who remain in Canaan fear that, by building this altar, Reuben and Gad are actually proclaiming a new site of worship; they consider this altar a threat to the spiritual well-being of those Israelites in Canaan.

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How does distance affect the relationship between the Israeli and diaspora Jewish communities today? Are there similar miscommunications?

2) Reuven and Gad explain that the Israelites in Canaan also have an obligation to *them*: to continue treating them as part of the community of Israel.

Do Jews in Israel have an obligation to those Jews living outside of Israel? If so, how does it compare to the Israelites' obligation to Reuven and Gad, to affirm their portion in the community of Israel?

Conclusion:

Talmud Bavli, Shavuot 39a, introduces this concept: כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה, all of Israel is entangled together. This implies that the each member of the community of Israel exists in relation to one another. How that relationship looks and the extent to which it takes into account our shared history and our shared future is up to us.

What change, if any, would you like to see in the relationship between Jewish communities in the diaspora and those in Israel?

Extra modern sources:

Listening\ T. Carmi

It's hard for two seashells to share a real conversation.
Each inclines its ear to its own sea.
Only the pearl diver or the antique dealer
Can say for certain: the same sea

קָשָׁב ט. כרמי

קָשָׁה לְשִׁתִּי קִנְיֹת לְשׁוֹחֵחַ שִׁיחָה-שֶׁל-מִמֶּשׁ
כָּל אַחַת מִטָּה אֶזֶן לַיָּם שְׁלָה.
רַק שׁוֹלֵה-הַפְּנִינִים אוֹ סוֹחֵר-הַעֲתִיקוֹת
יְכוּל לְקַבֹּעַ בְּלִי חֶשֶׁשׁ: אוֹתוֹ יָם

Three approaches in relation to meeting the "Other": שלושה אופני התייחסות ל"אחר" במפגש:

**You came to me, to open my eyes.
Your body was a view, a window and a mirror.**

בָּאתְ אֵלַי אֶת עֵינַי לְפָקֵחַ
וְגוֹפְךָ לִי מִבֶּט וְחִלּוֹן וְרֵאִי.

From the Poem, Forgiveness by Leah Goldberg

מתוך, סליחות, לאה גולדברג, כל השירים