

A Midrash for Monday

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Midrash Tanchuma, Matot #5

“The tribes of Reuven and Gad had much cattle...” (Numbers 32:1).

Teach us, our master. How many presents were created in the world?

This is what our rabbis taught. The Holy Blessed One created three presents: chokhmah (wisdom), gevurah (strength) and osher (wealth). If a person is privileged to any one of them, he can acquire any treasure in the world. If he is privileged to chokhmah, he can have it all. If he is privileged to gevurah, he can have it all. If he is privileged to osher, he can have it all.

This is true only if the gift comes from the Holy Blessed One's gevurah. But a person's own might and wealth are nothing. As Shlomo [King Solomon] says (Ecclesiastes 9:11), “I further observed that under the sun the race is not always won by the swift, nor the battle by the strong; the wise don't always have bread nor the intelligent wealth...” Yirmiyahu echos this when he says (Jeremiah 9:22), “This is what God says, ‘Let the sage not boast of his wisdom, the

strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his riches.'"
But if these presents aren't from the Ubiquitous One they
will ultimately cease from the person.

...

They lost these presents because they grabbed them for themselves. You find that this is what happened to the tribes of Gad and Reuven as well. They were extremely wealthy and had so much cattle, and so much loved their wealth/cattle that they settled outside the Land of Israel. This is why they were the first tribes to be exiled (see 1 Chronicles 5:26).*

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*There are different versions of this Midrash's text.