

Gad

Gen. 49:19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Jacob's son Gad, by his first wife's (Leah) maid, Zilpah (Gen. 35:26) was born in Paddan Aram, between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates where Abraham had come from. This was where Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for his son Isaac (Rebekah, Gen. 24:4,10; 25:20). It was where Jacob's uncle Laban lived, - Laban was the brother of his mother Rebekah. Gad was the first of two sons Jacob had by Zilpah, and his seventh son so far. A Hebrew rendering of Gen. 49:19 illustrates how Jacob emphasised this blessing by repeating the word 'troop' (paranomasia), "As for Gad [*troop, marauding band, a raiding party*] - a *troop* will *troop* on him, but he will *troop* on their heel". ... Later in life, Gad went to live in Egypt where he had seven sons (Gen. 46:16).

Jacob prophesied good news and bad for him, ... the bad news was, **Gen. 49:19** Gad, a troop shall overcome him ... and the good news, but he shall overcome at the last. ... Before him was the prospect of defeat by constant attacks from bands of raiders, ultimately though, he would overcome. ... We are not told how he would overcome or who was the enemy. ... Neither was he told when it would happen. ... Gad received a 'one liner' blessing from his dying father!

Basically, Gad was one of Jacob's more decent sons. Yes, he plotted against Joseph, but he was not a snake like Dan or violent and treacherous like Simeon and Levi. He was decent, but he would not get it easy! In the apportioning of the land, along with the tribe of Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh, the tribe of Gad were to fight for and settle in lands east of the Jordan river (Joshua 12:6; 13:8-13). This was low-lying land, with less hills, and was the gateway to the Promised Land from the east. It meant constant exposure to attacks from their enemies, making them very vulnerable, **Gen. 49:19** Gad, a troop shall overcome him.

Gad was one of the largest of the tribes, with 45,650 over the age of twenty (Num. 1:24,25). During the forty years in the wilderness, they camped to the south of the tabernacle with the tribes of Reuben and Simon. On arrival in Canaan, after the eastern area was captured from the Amorites (Num. 21:21-35), the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh decided to settle in that area. Each of these tribes had huge herds of cattle and sheep, and when they saw the lowlands of Gilead and Jazer were excellent for grazing, they requested from Moses, Eleazar, and the princes for this area to be given to them. ... They had found where they wanted to settle down.

At first Moses was concerned in case they were intending to take life easy and not help their fellow-Hebrews in the conquest of the whole land, and he rebuked them about their apparent negligence and apathy, **Num. 32:6** And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and *shall ye sit here?* In dangerous times when they needed to be standing together, he further admonished them, **7** And wherefore *discourage* ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? ... and he reminded them about a previous occasion of similar proportions, **8** Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land. **9** For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them. **10** And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, **11** Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me.

However, the leaders of Reuben and Gad assured Moses his fears were unfounded, **16** And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: **17** But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of

the inhabitants of the land. **18** We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. **19** For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward. ... On hearing this, Moses was content, **20** And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, **21** And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, **22** And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. ... **Gad looked to the land** and became settled.

Seeing it from Moses' point of view, they were only a small nation, who had just spent 430 years in Egypt, - 400 of which was in captivity and slavery, - and then a further 40 years of hardship and struggle in the wilderness. None of them could afford to relax for they all needed each other in the conquest of the land. Anything less was tantamount to abandoning the cause! ... That had been Moses' fear. ... And it is why it is important in every church fellowship for each able member to keep to the cause of Christ to which they initially committed themselves. It can be a real discouragement to see some working hard and others living off their labours, - that's the fear Moses and many of the people had concerning Gad. ... This was not a danger from an outside influence, but they feared this was a potential danger from within.

The fears were allayed though for not only did **Gad look to the land** but also more importantly, **Gad looked to the Lord**.

The Gadites certainly had no shortage of conflict in the land for they were constantly under attack. They were continually vulnerable, especially from the marauding desert-dwellers to the east. Nonetheless, even 'living on the edge', they remained faithful and alert, as Joshua commended them, **Joshua 22:1** Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the

Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, ² And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: ³ Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. ⁴ And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. ⁵ But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁶ So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. ... And so they were similarly blessed by Moses, **Dt. 33:20** And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. ²¹ And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

There are many Christians who often through no fault or choice of their own, live ‘on the edge’. It seems they go from one attack from Satan to another, without much relief in between. No sooner have they come out of one battle, but there is another one waiting for them. They are ‘living on the edge’. They don’t court danger, they don’t go looking for it, but it always seems to be waiting for them. ... And under such circumstances, **Gad looked to the Lord.**

When David was on the run from king Saul, he was out in the wilderness. He was not on his own because he had the company of the fighting men from a number of the tribes, including men from the tribe of Gad ... Look at the ‘row of medals’ they had collected since last we met them in Numbers 32, **I Chron. 12:8** And of the Gadites there ① *separated themselves unto David* into the hold to the wilderness ② *men of might*, and ③ *men of war fit for the battle*, that ④ *could handle shield and buckler*, ⑤ *whose faces were like the*

faces of lions, and were as © *swift as the roes upon the mountains*. ... Fantastic achievements!

They were faithfully occupied and held their own land on the fringes, while not abrogating any responsibilities towards their fellow-Israelites. They had honoured what Moses had said to them by heeding his words, **Num. 32:20** And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, **21** And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, **22** And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. **23** But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out. ... They had listened, **25** And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. **26** Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: **27** But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith ... and in I Chron. 12, they had honoured their word. ... **Gad looked to the Lord.**

While there are many followers of Christ who honour His name by faithfully serving Him, sadly there are also those who prioritise their own interests above His. They leave off from sharing God's work with other believers and that was what the tribe of Gad was being warned against. However, they *did* prove faithful and trustworthy, and they *did* realise they had the land because God had given it to them and their brethren. The people of Gad, - even though they were 'living on the edge' have much to teach us. They did not get it easy, but God honoured the blessing from old Jacob, **1Gen. 49:19** Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

When Saul and Jonathan were killed by the Philistines and their bodies were displayed for everyone to see, it was the men of Jabesh-Gilead, of the tribe of Gad, who graciously removed them. (I Sam. 31). ... It was

among the Gadites that David found asylum when his son Absalom was trying to kill him (II Sam. 17), and it was in the territory of the Gadites the battle was fought to regain him the throne (II Sam. 18). ... To complete the story regarding Gad's faithfulness on the border, after they had been faithful to their commitment to their brethren they returned to their own land. They built an altar near the Jordan river, not to offer sacrifices, - as the other tribes originally thought, - but as a symbol and a reminder of their unity with the rest of the tribes of Israel for future generations. **Joshua 22:1** Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, **2** And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: **3** Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. **4** And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. **5** But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. **6** So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. ... **10** And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to. ... **31** And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us ... **33** And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God ... **34** And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar *Ed 'witness', 'testimony'*: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.

Indeed, the children of Gad, Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. ... God's word always prevails!