

Numbers 32:1 ¶ Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place *was* a place for cattle;
Numbers 32:2 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying,
Numbers 32:3 Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,
Numbers 32:4 *Even* the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:
Numbers 32:5 Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and* bring us not over Jordan.

The children of Israel knew that they were preparing to take possession of the land of Canaan. The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, however, saw that the land on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead was a great place for raising livestock. So the leaders of Gad and Reuben came to Moses, Eleazar and the seventy leaders pointing out that fact. Because the land was such a good fit for them, they wanted to be given the land of Gilead as their possession.

I think it is important to note that in presenting their petition to Moses these men knew that they were actually petitioning the LORD since Moses was His delegated authority over the people.

Numbers 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?
Numbers 32:7 And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?
Numbers 32:8 Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.
Numbers 32:9 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.

Moses basically said, “Do you expect your brothers to have to fight for possession of the land without you?” Don’t you know that this would discourage the rest of the tribes from taking possession of the land that the LORD had promised them? This is exactly what your fathers did when they spies came back with their report that discouraged the people from trusting the LORD to give them the land.

Guzik made a good application from this section: “Moses’ fear had a foundation. If you want to press on with the things of the LORD and go deeper and further with Him, there is a sure way to discourage that desire - start hanging around believers who are content with where they are, and who don’t want to press on with the LORD. Complacency is contagious.”

Numbers 32:10 And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying,

Numbers 32:11 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:

Numbers 32:12 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.

Numbers 32:13 And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.

Numbers 32:14 And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.

Numbers 32:15 For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

Moses continued (my words): Because of their lack of trust in Him, the LORD was very angry with the people and swore that none of the men that were twenty years and older that had come out of Egypt would get to enjoy the inheritance that God had promised to give the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite and Joshua the son of Nun would be allowed to enter the land because they had evidenced complete faith that the LORD would empower them to take the land. Because of their unbelief, that generation was doomed to wander in the wilderness for forty years until they had all died. Now you are following in their footsteps and once again daring to invoke the LORD's anger towards Israel. Nothing is to keep Him from destroying this generation as well if they respond with the same unbelief.

Numbers 32:16 ¶ And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones:

Numbers 32:17 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.

Numbers 32:18 We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

Numbers 32:19 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.

The men from Gad and Reuben assured Moses that was not their intent. They would like to build and/or repair enclosures for their livestock and cities for their families; however, the men would arm themselves and join the rest of the tribes in taking possession of Canaan. They would leave their families in fenced cities as a protection against invaders, and they would not return to their families until the rest of the tribes had taken possession of the land. They just wanted to have their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan.

This was actually a great statement of faith. They were basically testifying that they knew that if they were given the promise of this land as their inheritance, they could trust the LORD to protect their families until they returned.

**Numbers 32:20 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war,
Numbers 32:21 And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,
Numbers 32:22 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.
Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.
Numbers 32:24 Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.**

Upon hearing their answer, Moses agreed to their proposal. Their inheritance, however, was conditional. If they did as they promised before the LORD, they would be guiltless before Him and the land would be given them as requested. If they did not, they could be sure that “your sin will find you out.” (This is just one of many popular sayings that find their origin in scripture.)

Coffman adds some insight: “The meaning here is not, ‘Be sure your sins will be found out, or discovered,’ but that your sin will get to you and punish you.”

So Moses gave them permission to build the cities for their families and enclosures for their sheep.

**Numbers 32:25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.
Numbers 32:26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead:
Numbers 32:27 But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.**

The leaders of Gad and Reuben promised to do as Moses had commanded. They would leave their children, wives, flocks and cattle in the cities of Gilead; but the men would arm themselves and join the other tribes to fight and take possession of the land of promise.

**Numbers 32:28 ¶ So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel:
Numbers 32:29 And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession:
Numbers 32:30 But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.**

Moses then commanded Eleazar and Joshua and the leaders of the tribes of Israel to give the land of Gilead to the children of Gad and Reuben if they kept their promise to help the other tribes take possession of Canaan. If, however, they did

not keep their promise, they would have to accept an inheritance on the west side of Jordan.

This is a little bit confusing to me, since it implies that these two tribes would receive an inheritance even if they did not join the other tribes in fighting to take possession of the land.

Numbers 32:31 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.

Numbers 32:32 We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan *may be* ours.

Numbers 32:33 And Moses gave unto them, *even* to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, *even* the cities of the country round about.

The leaders of Gad and Reuben promised to do as they had promised before the LORD. They would fight with their brethren in Canaan and take their possession on the east side of Jordan. So Moses gave the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh the kingdoms of Sihon the Amorite king and Og the king of Bashan as well as the cities on their borders and in the surrounding countryside.

It seems that half of the people of Manasseh wanted their inheritance on the east side of Jordan as well and were recognized as being represented by the leaders of Gad and Reuben.

Numbers 32:34 And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer,

Numbers 32:35 And Atroth, Shopan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah,

Numbers 32:36 And Bethnimrah, and Bethharan, fenced cities: and folds for sheep.

Numbers 32:37 And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim,

Numbers 32:38 And Nebo, and Baalmeon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded.

Numbers 32:39 And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which *was* in it.

Numbers 32:40 And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein.

Numbers 32:41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havothjair.

Numbers 32:42 And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

This section identifies the cities that were eventually built by the tribes that would take possession on the east side of Jordan. It is noted that their cities were fenced and included enclosures for the livestock.

It is also noted that Gilead was given to Machir, the son of Manasseh. The other two sons of Manasseh that inherited on the east side of Jordan were Jair and Nobah.