

# NUMBERS

## Chapter 32

### *Reuben and Gad Settle in Gilead*

Now the people of Reuben and the people of Gad had a very great number of livestock. And they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, and behold, the place was a place for livestock. 2 So the people of Gad and the people of Reuben came and said to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the chiefs of the congregation, 3 “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, 4 the land that the LORD struck down before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock.” 5 And they said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan.” 6 But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, “Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here? 7 Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the LORD has given them? 8 Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9 For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the LORD had given them. 10 And the LORD's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, 11 ‘Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, 12 none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.’ 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 gone. 14 And behold, you have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel! 15 For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people.” 16 Then they came near to him and said, “We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, 17 but we will take up arms, ready to go before the people of Israel, until we have brought them to their place. And our little ones shall live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 We will not return to our homes until each of the people of Israel has gained his inheritance. 19 For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east.” 20 So Moses said to them, “If you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the LORD for the war, 21 and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the LORD, until he has driven out his enemies from before him 22 and the land is subdued before the LORD; then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out. 24 Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what you have promised.” 25 And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben said to Moses, “Your servants will do as my lord commands. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our livestock, and all our cattle shall remain there in the cities of Gilead, 27 but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord orders.” 28 So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel. 29 And Moses said to them, “If the people of Gad and the people of Reuben, every man who is armed to battle before the LORD, will pass with you over the Jordan and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession. 30 However, if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” 31 And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben answered, “What the LORD has said to your servants, we will do. 32 We will pass over armed before

the LORD into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan.” 33 And Moses gave to them, to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben and to the half-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 and its cities with their territories, the cities of the land throughout the country. 34 And the people of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35 Atrothshophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 36 Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. 37 And the people of Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, 38 Nebo, and Baal-meon (their names were changed), and Sibmah. And they gave other names to the cities that they built. 39 And the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it. 40 And Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he settled in it. 41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and called them Havvoth-jair. 42 And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

**32:1** *people of Reuben and the people Gad.* The abundance of fertile grazing land in Transjordan prompted the leaders of these two tribes to request that they be allowed to settle there and not cross the Jordan. This area too was a gift of God won by conquest. (CSB)

*a place for livestock.* Plains for grazing. (TLSB)

**32:5** The prospect of material gain motivated the request by Reuben and Gad. Selfish interests prevailed over their sense of unity as the covenant people. They were inclined to shirk obligation to other tribes to complete the conquest of the Promised Land. (TLSB)

**32:6–9** Moses reminds the people of Reuben and Gad what happened when Israel last hesitated (ch 14). Also, the Reubenites were important instigators in Korah’s rebellion (16:1). (TLSB)

**32:7** *discourage the heart.* Moses feared that the desertion of the common cause by the two tribes would have the same disheartening effect on the people that the report of the spies had produced and would precipitate a similar judgment by the Lord (chs 13–14). (TLSB)

**32:8** *your fathers did.* Moses’ fear was that the failure of these two tribes to stay with the whole community in conquering Canaan would be the beginning of a general revolt against entering the land. It would be the failure of Kadesh (chs. 13–14) all over again. Moreover, the conquest of Canaan was a commission to all Israel. (CSB)

**32:14** Moses snaps at their suggestion (v 5), assuming that rebellion is again about to follow. (TLSB)

**32:16** *came near.* Perhaps for a private conference. (TLSB)

*sheepfolds.* Rock walls formed a large pen, where sheep and shepherds were safe from nighttime predators. Caves were also used for this purpose. (TLSB)

*cities for our little ones.* Permanent settlements. (TLSB)

**32:17** *we will take up arms.* The leaders of Reuben and Gad sought to assure Moses that they did not wish to shirk their duty in helping to conquer the land. They would join their brothers in battle but wished to leave their families and livestock behind in the territory of their choosing. (CSB)

**32:18** Gad and Reuben commit themselves to full and lasting military service to address Moses’ concern (v 6). (TLSB)

**32:20–22** Whereas the men of Reuben and Gad pledged themselves in service to their brethren (v 17), Moses emphasized they were vowing to serve the Lord. (TLSB)

**32:21** *pass over the Jordan*. Upon the promise of Gad and Reuben to help protect the other tribes, they were permitted to claim the land between the Arnon and Jabbok rivers, most of which had already been taken from the Amorites (21:21–35). It appears to have been a joint occupation of the entire territory without clearly defined borders between the two tribes. Manasseh was able to get its Transjordan portion by dispossessing the Amorites north of the Jabbok (vv 39–42). (TLSB)

**32:23** *your sin will find you out*. The bargain was struck, but not without strong warnings if they failed to live up to their word. (CSB)

God would judge them for an unfulfilled vow. (TLSB)

**32:28–29** The settlement discussed privately (vv 16–27) is now made public. (TLSB)

**32:33** *and the half-tribe of Manasseh*. It appears that after the requirements for Transjordan settlement were established with the tribes of Reuben and Gad, half the tribe of Manasseh joined with them. (CSB)

Half of the tribe of Manasseh received its land on the east side of the Jordan River, together with the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The other half of Manasseh will receive its land in Jsh 17. (TLSB)

**32:34–36** *built ... fortified cities, and folds for sheep*. They likely adapted captured cities and sheepfolds, so the settlement would not have taken too long. Cf vv 41–42. (TLSB)

**32:40** Moses had led the earlier attacks, which captured the territory, giving him authority to make the grants. (TLSB)

**32:42** *Nobah*. Perhaps from Gad. (TLSB)

**Ch 32** The Reubenites and Gadites desire the good land east of the Jordan to raise livestock. They vow to fight beside their brothers in the conquest of Canaan (fulfilled in Jsh 22:1–6). When you make promises, keep your word, for the Lord will hold you responsible. Rejoice that He keeps His Word responsibly, promising and delivering His blessings and care. • “O Comforter of priceless worth, Send peace and unity on earth; Support us in our final strife And lead us out of death to life.” Amen. (LSB 655:3) (TLSB)