

Numbers 32

Verses 1 – 5

Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had a very large number of livestock. So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that it was indeed a place suitable for livestock, ² the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, ³ “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, ⁴ the land which the Lord conquered 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 as *our* property; do not take us across the Jordan.”

Now the sons of Reuben and Gad had a very large number of livestock

Where did they get all this livestock?

Some of it came from the recent conquest of Midian but that livestock was divided among the fighting men and the people.

So how did Reuben and Gad end up with so much livestock?

The people of Israel had been slaves for 160 years doing manual labor but some of them managed the livestock of the King.

See Genesis 47:5 - 6

When they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead

These countries were taken from the two Amorite princes, Sihon and Og.

Gilead is a mountainous country, famous for its pasture land

Jazer is to the south of Gilead

See Map 3205 and 3210



The Mountains of Gilead



The land which the Lord conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock

Who conquered the land?

The Lord did.

Not even one soldier was lost.

If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as *our* property; do not take us across the Jordan

Reuben and Gad asked for permission to settle east of the Jordan

Was this part of the land God promised to Abraham?

See Gen 15:18

From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

If this was the only description of the Promised Land one might assume it went from the Nile to the Euphrates.

See Map 3215



But we have another description in Exodus 23:31

Will set your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines,

And from the wilderness to the Euphrates River

See Map 3220



"From the wilderness" is somewhat vague and could include any part of the Sinai but there is a "river" on the border of Egypt and Canaan that fits the actual land that Israel would possess under David & Solomon.

The word river is in quotes because a Wadi can look like a river one day, wet sand the next day and a dry river bed the following day.

Nevertheless, the boundaries set in Exodus 23:31 were realized during the reigns of David and Solomon.

The boundary set during the reign of David met the east and west description as well as the southern border. Then the Northern boundary was set during the time of Solomon.

However, these boundaries soon changed when the kingdom was divided after the reign of Solomon.

See Map 3225



Verses 6 – 15

⁶ But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, “Should your brothers go to war while you remain here? ⁷ And why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the Lord has given them? ⁸ This is what your fathers did 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 sons of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them. ¹⁰ So the Lord’s anger burned on that day, and He swore, saying, ¹¹ ‘None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully, ¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun; for they have followed the Lord fully.’ ¹³ So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the Lord came to an end. ¹⁴ Now behold, you have risen up in your fathers’ place, born of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the Lord against Israel. ¹⁵ For *if* you turn away from following Him, He will once more leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people.”

But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, “Should your brothers go to war while you remain here?”

Was Moses justified in his anger?

They had clearly said, “Do not take us across the Jordan” but it is possible that they meant as a permanent living place.

And why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the Lord has given them?

Moses reminds them of the events following the sending out of the spies

- (1) It discouraged Israel
- (2) Jehovah's anger was kindled against Israel
- (3) God forbid any of that generation except Caleb and Joshua to enter Canaan
- (4) The Lord punished the nation with forty years of wanderings in the wilderness

Now behold, you have risen up in your fathers' place, born of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the Lord against Israel. ¹⁵ For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

Moses rebuked them in an effort to make them realize how their request could affect the other tribes.

They did not tell Moses that he had misunderstood them, but they did respond with a plan that satisfied his concerns.

Verses 16 - 19

¹⁶ Then they approached him and said, "We will build sheepfolds for our livestock here and cities for our little ones; ¹⁷ but we ourselves will be armed, hurrying ahead of the sons of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, while our little ones live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has gained possession of his inheritance. ¹⁹ But we will not have an inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan toward the east."

We will build sheepfolds for our livestock here and cities for our little ones; ¹⁷ but we ourselves will be armed, hurrying ahead of the sons of Israel

Did they keep their promise? Yes they did!

See Joshua 4:13

40,000 armed men passed over Jordan

There were 110,580 men of war in Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Where are the other 70,580 soldiers?

They remained at home for the defense of the women and children and to help maintain the general function of the camp

This area had been defeated but the woman and children would have been easy pray for any surrounding nations that might take advantage of the situation.

The other tribes did the same thing as they conquered the land of Canaan.

Since the conquering of Canaan took 7 years, the men were probably rotated between two positions.

200,000 men were available for war.

While 400,000 stayed back to guard the camp and do the hard labor.

Verses 20 – 27

²⁰ So Moses said to them, “If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, ²¹ and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven His enemies out from Him, ²² and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you may return and be free of obligation toward the Lord and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours as property before the Lord. ²³ But if you do not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure that your sin will find you out. ²⁴ Build yourselves cities for your little ones, and sheepfolds for your sheep, and do what you have promised.” ²⁵ Then the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying, “Your servants will do just 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 while your servants, *that is*, everyone who is armed for war, cross over in the presence of the Lord to battle, just as my lord says.”

²⁰ So Moses said to them, “If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, ²¹ and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven His enemies out from Him,

Did all of the armed men cross over the Jordan?

Initially, only 40,000 went over the Jordan but it is likely that this group was replaced with fresh troops and this process was repeated a number of times during the 7 year war so that eventually all of the 110,000 men of war had crossed the Jordan.

Then afterward you may return and be free of obligation toward the Lord and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours as property before the Lord

Moses stressed the fact that they had an obligation to God and the other tribes.

The 2 1/2 tribes acknowledged the obligation and promised to do their part.

Verses 28 – 32

²⁸ So Moses gave the command regarding them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' *households* of the tribes of the sons of Israel. ²⁹ And Moses said to them, "If the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, everyone who is armed for battle, cross with you over the Jordan in the presence of the Lord, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as *their* property; ³⁰ but if they do not cross over with you armed, they shall instead be settled among you in the land of Canaan." ³¹ And the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben answered, saying, "As the Lord has said to your servants, so we will do. ³² We ourselves will cross over armed in the presence of the Lord into the land of Canaan, and the property of our inheritance *shall remain* with us across the Jordan."

²⁸ So Moses gave the command regarding them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' households of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

Moses informed all of the leadership, the religious, the military, and the civil leaders of this agreement he had made with the 2 1/2 tribes.

And Moses said to them, "If the sons of Gad and Reuben cross with you over the Jordan, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as *their* property

The "**if....then**", clause is very common in scripture.

If.... the 2 ½ tribes joined the other tribes in battle against the enemy.

And **if.....** the 12 tribes were victorious.

Then.....the 2 ½ tribes would get the land of Gilead

Gilead here refers to the area east of the Jordan

And the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben answered, saying, "As the Lord has said to your servants, so we will do

The 2 ½ tribes saw this agreement as coming from the Lord.

Verses 33 - 42

³³ So Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad, the sons of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og, the king of Bashan, the land with its cities with *their* territories, the cities of the surrounding land. ³⁴ And the sons of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵ Atroth-shopan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶ Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran as fortified cities, and sheepfolds for sheep. ³⁷ The sons of Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ³⁸ Nebo, and Baal-meon—*their* names being changed—and Sibmah, and they gave *other* names to the cities which they built. ³⁹ The sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it. ⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he lived in it. ⁴¹ Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its towns, and called them Havvoth-jair. ⁴² Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and named it Nobah, after his own name.

So Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad, the sons of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og, the king of Bashan

The 2½ tribes are given the area east of the Jordan which included:

1. The kingdom of Og, the king of Bashan to the north
2. The kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites to the south

See map 3230 below

The sons of Gad built.....

The sons of Reuben built.....

The sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and he lived in it.....

Above, Gilead referred to the whole area east of the Jordan

Here it refers to the Northern area of the kingdom of Og.

See map 3230 below

NATIONS TO BE DISPLACED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

