

Numbers Lesson 32

Numbers Chapter 32

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Memory verses for this week: *Gal 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Introduction: In last week's lesson, we studied about how God defeated the Midianites with just 12,000 men, using 1,000 from each of the 12 tribes. We read about how they divided up the spoil and provided an offering to the tribe of Levi and the priests. Those that fought in the battle only gave a small portion of their proceeds in offerings.

I. Two Tribes Seek to Settle on this side of Jordan

Num 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;

Num 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,

Num 32:3 Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,

Num 32:4 Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

Num 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 Reuben and the children of Gad come and make a request to Moses. They both had a large abundance of cattle, and the land on this side of Jordan was a good land to raise cattle. They ask if it would be permissible to take this land as theirs rather than going over to the other side of Jordan.

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?

Num 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?

Num 32:8 Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.

Moses questions whether the reason they request this was to keep from going to war. In verse 7, he asks whether they seek to discourage the other brethren by staying back on this side of Jordan. Moses reminds them of how 10 of the 12 spies had come back with a bad report when he sent them to spy out the land from Kadeshbarnea.

Matthew Henry said this about the desire to stay on the east side of Jordan

Two things common in the world induced these tribes to make this choice and this motion upon it, the *lust of the eye* and the *pride of life*, 1 Jn. 2:16. 1. The *lust of the eye*. This land which they coveted was not only beautiful for situation, and pleasant to the

eye, but it was good for food, food for cattle; and they had a great multitude of cattle, above the rest of the tribes.

Moses' dislike of this motion, and the severe rebuke he gives to it, as a faithful prince and prophet. 1. It must be confessed that at *first sight*, the thing looked ill, especially the closing words of their petition: *Bring us not over Jordan*, v. 5 (1.) It seems to proceed from a bad principle, a contempt of the land of promise, which Moses himself was so desirous of a sight of, a distrust too of the power of God to dispossess the Canaanites, as if a lot in a land which they knew, and which was already conquered, was more desirable than a lot in a land they knew not, and which was yet to be conquered: one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There seemed also to be covetousness in it; for that which they insisted on was that it was convenient for their cattle.

It argued likewise a neglect of their brethren, as if they cared not what became of Israel, while they themselves were well provided for. (2.) It might have been of bad consequence. The people might have taken improper hints from it, and have suggested that they were few enough, when they had their whole number, to deal with the Canaanites, but how unequal would the match be if they should drop two tribes and a half (above a fifth part of their strength) on this side Jordan. It would likewise be a bad precedent; if they must have the land thus granted them as soon as it was conquered, other tribes might make the same pretensions and claims, and so the regular disposition of the land by lot would be anticipated. 1

Num 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.

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

Num 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 ' followed me:

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

Num 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.

Num 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.

Num 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 reminds these men of how upset God had been with those 10 spies, and how he had sworn that none of them 20 years old and up would ever live to cross over into the promised land except for Caleb and Joshua. These were the other two spies who came back with a positive view of taking the land. Their sin was 'not wholly following the Lord' it says in verse 11. And now, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, all of those men had died. The Lord had severely punished those who believed not, and Moses says that these had risen up in their fathers' stead and might augment the fierce anger of the

1Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

Lord towards Israel. If the people turned from the Lord, Moses says it might be that God will leave them all in the wilderness and destroy the whole nation.

II. The Men Explain their Views

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

Num 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.

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

Num 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.

Reuben and Gad's descendants respond to Moses. tell him that they will build sheepfolds and cities. And then they would go armed with the rest of the tribes of Israel to battle until all is settled. In verse 17, they explain that they will leave their little ones in the cities because of the inhabitants of the land, but the men would stay with the battle until all was subdued. And then, they would not require any inheritance on the other side of Jordan in the promised land, because their inheritance would be on the east side of Jordan.

III. Moses' Response

Num 32:20 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war,

Num 32:21 And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,

Num 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.

Num 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.

Num 32:24 Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

Moses was a reasonable man. He tells them that if they will go to war and stay in the battle until the land was subdued, then it would be permissible for them to return and inherit this land. But if they failed to do as they had promised, be sure that you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. This is a basic and critical principle about obedience.

For both sinner and saint, our sins will find us out. Sometimes sin is quickly revealed. Other times it is hidden for a time. But one thing is certain, God knows everything and sin does not escape God's knowledge.

Proverbs 5:21-22

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

22His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

J. Vernon McGee had a good comment on verse 23.

The way this is usually interpreted is, “Your sin will be found out.” In other words, if you sin, you won’t get by with it. You will be found out. That is not what it says at all. There are a great many sinners who get by with their sins and are never found out by anyone else.

This verse says that your sin will find *you* out. There will come that time when the chickens come home to roost. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). I don’t care who you are, or where you are, how you are, or when you are, your sins will find *you* out. In the way that you sin, that is the way it is going to come home to you sometime. That is the meaning of this statement, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” 2

IV. Reuben and Gad Reaffirm Their Promise

Num 32:25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.

Num 32:26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead:

Num 32:27 But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.

They respond and say that “Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.” They repeat that their little ones, their wives, flocks, and cattle will stay in the cities of Gilead while they go over and fight the war.

Num 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:

Num 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:

Num 32:30 But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.

Moses command Eleazar, Joshua, and the chief fathers of the tribes. He tells them that if the Reubenites and Gadites do as they say, then they would possess the land of Gilead. But if they did not pass over, then their possession would be west of Jordan like the others.

2J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

Num 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.

Num 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.

Again the children of Gad and Reuben answer and say they will do as the Lord had commanded. They would pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan that they might have their possession on the east side of Jordan. While I know this is a spiritual teaching here, I think we can also relate this to business. And the good business principle is that both parties fully understand and agree to all parts of a negotiation that they enter. Taking even simple things for granted can lead to serious misunderstandings.

V. Moses Includes the Half Tribe of Manasseh in the Agreement

Num 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.

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

Num 32:35 And Atroth, Shophan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah,

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

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

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

Num 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.

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

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

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

In the inheritance on the east side of Jordan, Moses includes the half tribe of Manasseh which was the lineage of Joseph. He granted them part of the land due to the fact that they had been involved in conquering this territory. The tribe of Manasseh also inherited a portion of the land on the west side of Jordan in the promised land also. It gives where the tribes would inherit in these verses.

The half tribe of Manasseh would inherit the kingdom of Sihon in the land of Amorites as well as the kingdom of the king of Bashan, Og. All of the land and cities there on the coasts would be theirs as well as the cities of the country round about this land. The children of Gad built the cities of Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, Atroth, Shophan, Jaazer, Jogbehah, Bethnimrah, and Bethharan. The children on Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kirjathaim, Nebo, and Baalmeon, and Shibmah.

The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, went to Gilead and took it from the Amorites. Jair, the son of Manasseh, went and took the small towns thereof and called them Havothjair. And the other son, Nobah, took Kenath and the villages thereof and

called it Nobah after his own name. We see that Manasseh's sons did not build cities, but went in and took the cities for them to possess.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.