

# “Settling for Mediocreville”

## Numbers Chapter 32

The Children of Israel is on the east side of the Jordan. The Promised Land is in sight and in a couple of months they will cross over and inhabit the land.

Israel's journey has brought them close before but the fear (lack of trust in the Lord) of 10 spies had caused them to have to turn away and wander for 38 years until the disbelieving generation had died off. They now find themselves in the same place; their future required them to Trust in the Lord.

This is the chapter where Reuben and Gad settle for less than God's best and eventually In time ½ the tribe of Manasseh settles with them.



### Num 32:1 1) Reuben and Gad's Request vs 1-5

Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had an exceedingly large number of livestock. So when they saw the land of Jazer and

Num 32:2 the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the congregation, saying,

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

Num 32:4 the land which the LORD conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock."

Num 32:5 They said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan."

- For 400 years it had been the desire of the nation to return to the Promised Land given to Abraham by the Lord.
  - Genesis 15:13-16 the promise to Abraham "God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where **they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years**. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then **in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.**"
  - They are now at the edge of the promises.
- In Numbers chapter 31 Israel conquered the 5 kings of Midian and Moab (chapter 24-25 use Midian and Moab interchangeably. This is because they dwelt together and they were allies)
- The land was now for the taking. Reuben and Gad had camped together on the south side of the Tabernacle. They had partnered together in this request to Moses.
- Their Request: To Remain on the East Side and Not Cross Over
  - For the land was rich for grazing livestock
  - For they had much livestock
  - Possible they felt they had fought enough and wanted their reward now.
- Reuben and Gad were making their decision based upon cows. Not the Lord's calling.
- To be honest, livestock was the standard that measured a man's wealth and status. Much like today our careers do. Reuben and Gad was more into preserving their career than their calling.
  - Today we see people who limit their devotion because of their jobs. "I have to work" Job requirement do at times demand not participation with the rest of the congregation. But more often than not those who are in that position are not following up at other times or finding their place of devotion and unity with their congregation. This has consequences.



Num 32:6

## 2) Moses' Response vs 6-15

But Moses said to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben, "Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?"

Num 32:7

"Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them?"

- Reuben and Gad are choosing for themselves not what the Lord has chosen for them.
  - Deuteronomy 4:37-38 "And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day."
- It is a shame for them to settle and sit idly by while their brothers are in battle. Just because they have their land does not relieve them of their responsibility before God or the Brethren.
  - This is an example of a sin of omission. There are sins that we commit (things we do) then there are those of omission (things that the Lord wants us to do but then we do not do them).
  - Matthew 21:28-32 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him."
- Moses also is telling them that this decision will cause others at the least discouragement if not encourage complacency in others. "Complacency is contagious" As is the case of the ½ tribe of Manasseh (see verses 33-42)
- Moses is also telling them that the Lord **HAS** already given them the land. It is a done deal and all you have to do is enter and trust God in the battle.

A Brief History Lesson by Moses

Num 32:8

"This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.

Num 32:9

"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.

- 38 years earlier the previous generation discouraged the nation with a poor report and the result was the anger of the Lord.

Num 32:10

"So the LORD'S anger burned in that day, and He swore, saying,

Num 32:11

"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,

Num 32:12

except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the LORD fully.'

- The entire nation was swayed by the spy's poor report and was discouraged from trusting the Lord.
- Discouragement to fulfill the plan of God comes from not fully following the Lord.
- Only Joshua and Caleb were Fully Following the Lord.
  - What makes things worse is that Caleb was a Kenizzite (Genesis 15:19 a Kenizzite was not an original part of the Nation of Israel and more of the people to be uprooted by Israel) probably a proselyte.
  - Jeremiah 9:23-24 "Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD."
  - Matthew 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Num 32:13 "So the LORD'S anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the LORD was destroyed.

Num 32:14 "Now behold, you have risen up in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the LORD against Israel.

Num 32:15 "For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

- Moses lets them know they are repeating the error of the previous generation.
- While Moses knows they are making a bad choice for themselves he is severe about the fact that if Reuben and Gad may discourage the rest of the tribe from going into God's perfect will.
  - These have the right to not enter in and face their own consequences but if they turn other from going in it. It is just like the 10 whose evil report wiped out an entire generation.
  - Reuben and Gad's complacency must not be allowed to infect others.

Num 32:16 **3) Reuben and Gad's Concession** vs 16-19

Then they came near to him and said, "We will build here sheepfolds for our livestock and cities for our little ones;

Num 32:17 but we ourselves will be armed ready *to go* before 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.

Num 32:18 "We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has possessed his inheritance.

Num 32:19 "For we will not have an inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side of the Jordan toward the east."

- This sounds noble that they would build their homes and pens for the livestock and go into battle with their brother. They were even willing to go in to fight until all the land is possessed.
- There are 3 Problems:
  - 1) They are not in the Promised Land. Later in Israel's history we will find that it is these tribes on the outside that fall to the Assyrians first. They are outside God's protective will.
  - 2) The battle until the land is inhabited will last 7 years. What does it do to children ages 8-15 or 12-19 or 16-23 that their father is not home to nurture? How about a spouse? Think of the lessons the children will miss out on not being there during the Lords victories.
  - 3) They have decided what their inheritance is rather than receive what the Lord gives as an inheritance. Makes me think of the prodigal son taking his inheritance on his terms not the fathers.

Num 32:20 **4) Agreement Reached and Announced and Implemented** vs 20-42

**Reached** So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for the war,

Num 32:21 and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven His enemies out from before Him,

Num 32:22 and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the LORD and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the LORD.

Num 32:23 "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and **be sure your sin will find you out.**

Num 32:24 "Build yourselves cities for your little ones, and sheepfolds for your sheep, and do what you have promised."

- Moses agrees to the terms because the issue of discouragement is dealt with. Those on the outside will not be resting. They will fight alongside their brothers.

- If they do not follow through " *their sin will find them out*" -- they will not get away with it.
- James 4:17 " *Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*"

Num 32:25 The sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying, "Your servants will do just as my lord commands.

Num 32:26 "Our little ones, our wives, our livestock and all our cattle shall remain there in the cities of Gilead;

Num 32:27 while your servants, everyone who is armed for war, will cross over in the presence of the LORD to battle, just as my lord says."

- Reuben and Gad Agree

Num 32:28 So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' *households* of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

Num 32:29 Moses said to them, "If the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, everyone who is armed for battle, will 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 for a possession;

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

Num 32:31 The sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben answered, saying, "As the LORD has said to your servants, so we will do.

Num 32:32 "We ourselves will cross over armed in the presence of the LORD into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance *shall remain* with us across the Jordan."

- Moses informs Eleazar the High Priest, Joshua the next Leader. And the leaders of the tribes the situation and the agreement.
- Reuben and Gad confirm the agreement publically.

Num 32:33 So Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad and to 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.

Num 32:34 The sons of **Gad** built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer,

Num 32:35 and Atroth-shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah,

Num 32:36 and Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran as fortified cities, and sheepfolds for sheep.

Num 32:37 The sons of **Reuben** built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kiriathaim,

Num 32:38 and Nebo and Baal-meon—*their* names being changed—and Sibmah, and they gave *other* names to the cities which they built.

Num 32:39 The sons of Machir the son of **Manasseh** went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it.

Num 32:40 So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he lived in it.

Num 32:41 Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its towns, and called them Havvoth-jair.

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

- Even after all this work in ironing out an agreement there was ½ of another tribe also did not enter in.
- Anytime we do not follow fully after the Lord it affects others around us.

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