

# THE LAND THAT REUBEN AND GAD CHOSE

**BIBLE TEXT** Numbers 32:1-32; Judges 5:16, 17

LESSON 112 - JUNIOR COURSE

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psalm 119:36).

## Bible Text in King James Version:

### **Numbers 32:1-32 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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;

<sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,

<sup>4</sup> *Even* the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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?

<sup>7</sup> And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

<sup>8</sup> Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying,

<sup>11</sup> 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:

<sup>12</sup> Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> And the LORD'S anger was kindled

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### **At the Borders of Canaan**

The Israelites were camped just across the River Jordan from the Land of Canaan which God had promised their forefathers as a possession. The Canaanites still lived there, but the promise of God was so sure that the land would be theirs that He told Moses to go and number each tribe of Israel so the country could be divided according to the need of each family. There was enough land for all the tribes to have an inheritance. Canaan had been promised as the land that flowed with milk and honey, and the spies had proved that it was very rich when they brought back the great bunch of grapes that had to be carried by two men. The Israelites did not need to worry about the inhabitants, because God had promised to drive them out by fear. They were going to run from the Israelites, and if they did not hurry God would send hornets to sting them (Exodus 23:27, 28). It was going to be easy for the Children of Israel to take the land if they did exactly as God told them to do.

But before they ever crossed Jordan some of the tribes decided that they were satisfied to stay in the land of Gazer and Gilead, and they did not want to go into Canaan. There was much pasture land here, and they felt they could prosper on this side of Jordan, so why take their wives and children on a longer march to suffer the hardships of travel? They were tired and wanted to settle down. But God's people should be very careful about settling down.

The proposal of the Reubenites and Gadites sounded reasonable, but when Moses heard it he was afraid of God's judgment. That was not God's plan. What if He should be so much displeased with them that He would again condemn all Israel to wander in the wilderness?

#### **The Sin of Their Fathers**

Thirty-eight years before, their fathers had come this close to the Promised Land, and then had been afraid to go in and take it. The spies had brought back an evil report about giants — which God had promised to conquer for them. They were such cowards that they had cried. They made the excuse that they were afraid their children would die.

Now, thirty-eight years later, all the parents who had murmured at that time were dead, and those same children were ready to possess Canaan. And then Reuben and Gad decided not to go in! You can see why Moses was frightened. What if God should again turn that great procession away from Jordan to that barren wilderness where thousands of Israelites had bleached their bones!

#### **Discouragement**

Or perhaps the fact that these two tribes did not want to go on might discourage the other people. There is strength in courage, but let a little discouragement creep in, and a person will become fearful and weak. As we serve God and go forth to fight His battles He will give us victories; but if we suffer some rebuffs, and wonder if it pays to put so much strength into the Gospel when men refuse to listen, we will soon lose all the spirit God has given us to win souls to His Kingdom. "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6). "Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good" (II Chronicles 19:11).

However, the princes of the tribes of Reuben and Gad told Moses they were not afraid to fight; and after their families were settled in cities, the strong warriors would be willing to go with the rest of the Israelites to battle for their possessions across Jordan. This seemed to satisfy Moses and he consented to let them have their way.

But how much more God could have done for them if they had gone "all the way." God had planned to shelter His people in their own land, but the tribes that did not cross the border would not have this protection. They would be exposed to greater temptations than their brothers who were pressing in to get God's best.

#### **Idolatry**

Do you remember what caused the Children of Israel to lose some of the battles they fought? So long as they worshiped God with all their heart He promised that no weapon formed against them should prosper. But when the people forgot all the good things He had done for them, and worshiped idols — gods made of wood, stone, or gold —

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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

<sup>16</sup> And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones:

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war,

<sup>21</sup> And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

<sup>24</sup> Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

<sup>25</sup> And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.

<sup>26</sup> Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead:

<sup>27</sup> But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.

He let terrible trouble come upon them. Besides losing the battles, the Children of Israel sometimes would be afflicted with plagues which would break out to kill the worst offenders; and at other times whole tribes or even all of Israel were carried into captivity.

### Separation

By living on the east side of Jordan the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh were separated from their kinsmen, and were far from the Tabernacle where God's presence dwelt. After the wanderings of the Children of Israel were over, a permanent place of worship was set up in Canaan; but it was difficult for the two and a half tribes to go there, and it is doubtful if they went very often. Being so far from the house of worship and the association of the other Israelites, and having idol-worshiping neighbors, the Hebrews east of Jordan soon forgot the true God and were the first tribes to be carried away into captivity — because of their idolatry (I Chronicles 5:25, 26).

### All the Way

When we are saved, whether we say it in words or not, we promise God to go "all the way." So long as we keep that purpose in our heart, He blesses us. Just what do we mean by going all the way?

When a sinner comes to Jesus in repentance and promises to serve Him, he has his sins forgiven and starts on the heavenly way. In his newly-found joy he has courage and feels that he can conquer any trouble which may arise, and he does not feel his need of anything more from God. Could anything be greater than this? But when he learns about sanctification, and he is still satisfied without it, he is like the Gadites and Reubenites — he is settling east of Jordan. He may go on for a while as a Christian, but he does not get out of the Gospel all which God has for him. Just think of the greater joys of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost he is missing!

Another person may go on and seek sanctification and receive it. He knows there is the baptism of the Holy Ghost for him, too, but it will take much consecration to get it, and he would rather not work so hard at his religion, so he neglects to seek it. Do you think he is going all the way?

Then there are other people whose zeal for God will carry them on until they have received the baptism. They are determined to have all God has for them; and how happy they are when they receive that experience! Now they feel they have all they need and can settle down. They do not have to pray so much now, they think, and they can sit back and enjoy the meetings. They do not care to do any work in the church (perhaps they think they are unworthy), but neither do they want to carry any responsibility. They are willing to sing the songs and enjoy the sermons, but they want someone else to bear the burden of long and earnest prayer, the diligent musical practice, or other work that the Lord requires. Perhaps someone has been called of God to preach, but that means a great deal of self-denial, and few people are willing to make such a sacrifice. Now do you think that such people are going all the way? Many people are willing to be numbered with the children of God and bear the reproach of the Gospel, and yet they will not be "about the Master's business."

Of course there will be battles to fight, just as Israel had to conquer Canaan, but victory is just as sure for us as it was for the Israelites when they obeyed God.

### Rewards

One day God is going to reward His people "according to their works." The biggest prizes will not be for great deeds, but for faithfulness in all God has called us to do. Those who have sat back and let someone else do God's service will receive no reward; some who thought they were working for God will find that they were really trying to please their fellow men, and their works will be burned up (I Corinthians 3:11-15). But those who have followed on to know the will of God in everything, and have served Him faithfully in all they found to do, will hear Christ's commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Where did Reuben and Gad want to settle?
- 2 Why?
- 3 Why was Moses displeased with their proposal?
- 4 What did the Gadites and Reubenites promise to do?
- 5 What do we mean by going "all the way" with the Lord?

<sup>28</sup> 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:

<sup>29</sup> 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:

<sup>30</sup> But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.

<sup>31</sup> And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

#### **Judges 5:16-17 (KJV)**

<sup>16</sup> Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

<sup>17</sup> Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.