

12.37 Two and One-Half Tribes East of Jordan (Numbers 32:1–42; Deuteronomy 3:12–22; Joshua 12:1–6; 13:8–32)

(The teacher might want to combine this lesson with Lesson 12.38 “Cities of Refuge; Care for Levites.”)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- [None for this lesson]

Scripture: (NASB)

Numbers 32:1 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 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 and to 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 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.”

6 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? 7 Now 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 in 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 forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the LORD was destroyed. 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. 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.”

16 Then they came near to him and said, “We will build here sheepfolds for our livestock and cities for our little ones; 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. 18 We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has possessed his inheritance. 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.”

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 before Him, 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. 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 yourselves cities for your little ones, and sheepfolds for your sheep, and do what you have promised.”

25 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, everyone who is armed for war, will cross over in the presence of the LORD to battle, just as my lord says.”

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. 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; 30 but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” 31 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 possession of our inheritance *shall remain* with us across the Jordan.”

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. 34 The sons of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer, 35 and Atroth-shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah, 36 and Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran as fortified cities, and sheepfolds for sheep. 37 The sons of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kiriathaim, 38 and 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 called it Nobah after his own name.

[Deuteronomy 3:12–17 reiterates the above paragraph.]

18 “Then I commanded you at that time, saying, ‘The LORD your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel. 19 But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall remain in your cities which I have given you, 20 until the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession which I have given you.’ 21 I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, ‘Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.’

Joshua 12:1 Now these are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the valley of the Arnon as far as Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah to the east: 2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, *and* ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, both the middle of the valley and half of Gilead, even as far as the brook Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; 3 and the Arabah as far as the Sea of Chinneroth toward the east, and as far as the sea of the Arabah, *even* the Salt Sea, eastward toward Beth-jeshimoth, and on the south, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah; 4 and the territory of Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5 and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half of Gilead, *as far as* the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6 Moses the servant of the LORD and the sons of Israel defeated them; and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh as a possession.

13:8 . . . 13 But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day. 14 Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him.

[Verses 15–31 are detailed information about the exact boundaries of the two and one-half tribes.]

32 These are *the territories* which Moses apportioned for an inheritance in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho to the east.

Introduction/Review:

Within a few short months, Israel had wiped out two powerful kings and their cities and people, had sinned by worshipping the false gods of the Moabites and Midianites, and had suffered a terrible plague. They now possessed land on the east side of the Jordan River from the valley of the Arnon [locate] as far as Mount Hermon, and all the plains to the east. The only land they did not conquer was that of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, for God had prohibited the conquest of these family nations.

Story:

A desirable land

“This vast land is perfect for raising livestock,” said men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. “Hey, we have lots of livestock. Let’s see if we can claim this side of the Jordan River for our inheritance. ✓Let’s go set up a meeting with Moses, Eleazar, and leaders of the tribes so that we can ask them about it.”

That conference took place, and the men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh set forth their case: “The land which the LORD conquered for the congregation of Israel is a land for livestock, and we, your servants, own an exceedingly large number of livestock. If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to us, your servants, as a possession. We do not want the land across the Jordan.”

A negative response

As is so often the case when an idea is first presented, this suggestion was snubbed. Moses objected strongly, saying, “Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here on this side of Jordan? Why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land as your fathers did when I sent spies to see the land. They disheartened the sons of Israel so that the LORD’s anger burned in that day, saying, ‘None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for they did not follow Me fully. Only Caleb and Joshua, who did follow the LORD fully, may enter.’”

“The LORD made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until every one of those who had done evil in the sight of the LORD was destroyed,” Moses continued. “Now here you are, just like your fathers, a brood of sinful men, who will increase the LORD’s burning anger against Israel. If you turn these people away from following Him, He will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people.”

A helpful intention

The fact that the eastern tribes did not intend any such discouragement is seen in their answer to Moses: “We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock and cities for our little ones, but we will arm ourselves and go with the sons of Israel until they have conquered their land. We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has possessed his inheritance. Then we will come back here to our inheritance on this east side of the Jordan.”

Good for you, Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh! Moses’ mind was changed by this graciously expressed intention of these men. He said to them, “If you will do this—all of you armed men will cross over the Jordan until the LORD has driven His enemies out—you will fulfill your obligation toward the LORD and toward Israel. In that case, this land on the east of Jordan shall be yours. But if you will not help the other tribes, you will have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out. Build your cities for your little ones, and sheepfolds for your sheep, and do what you have promised.”

An official directive

So Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes of Israel, “If the soldiers of Gad and Reuben and half of Manasseh will cross with you over the Jordan until the land is subdued before you,

then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession. But if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possession among you in the land of Canaan.”

Gad, Reuben, and one-half Manasseh answered, “As the LORD has said to your servants, so we will do. We 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 on this side of the Jordan.”

Thus, the two and one-half tribes possessed nearly all the land east of Jordan that had already been conquered by Israel. Any land, however, inhabited by Moab, Ammon, and Edom was not theirs to possess according to the command of God.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
As the two and one-half tribes left their new homeland in order to aid the other tribes, so Jesus left Heaven to come to this earth in order to save His people from their sins.
- The two and one-half tribes showed the quality of self-sacrifice, a quality we should have.

Activities:

- Play dough: houses; sheepfolds; sheep, cattle; children
- Snack: Sugar cookies in the shape of cows and sheep. A more healthful snack is cauliflower sheep. For a recipe that puts together cauliflower and black olives with toothpicks, go to https://vbs.cph.org/2016/downloads/Snacks_Lesson1.pdf. (See also “Handwork” below.)
- Review questions: (Game: Make corrals from plastic barnyard toy fences. Using a total of eight plastic sheep and cows, let each student place an animal in the corral after answering a question correctly.)
 1. Why did the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh want to settle on the east side of the Jordan River? [Because they had lots of livestock, and this land was good for livestock.]
 2. Why did these three tribes want to speak to Moses, Eleazar, and the leaders of the congregation? [To ask if they could settle east of the Jordan River.]
 3. What was Moses’ initial response to the two and one-half tribes? [He did not like their idea.]
 4. Give one of Moses’ arguments against the proposition. [1. “Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?” 2. You will discourage the other tribes from crossing over into the land. 3. If the people don’t go into the land, God will be angry and possibly destroy the people.]
 5. How did the two and one-half tribes answer Moses’ objections? [They said they would build sheepfolds and cities for the protection of their families; they would join with the other tribes in fighting; they would return when the conquest was complete.]
 6. What did Moses say would happen if the two and one-half tribes went to help the other tribes? [They would be able to live east of Jordan.]
 7. What did Moses say would happen if the two and one-half tribes did not go help the other tribes? [They would also have to cross Jordan and live in Canaan.]
 8. Whose land did the two and one-half tribes not possess? [That of Edom, Moab, and Ammon.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the “Exodus 20:1–17” song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the “Lessons” and “Songs” pages at teachingthebibleto kids.org. “Stop! It’s the Law,” a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same “Songs” page.

Handwork:

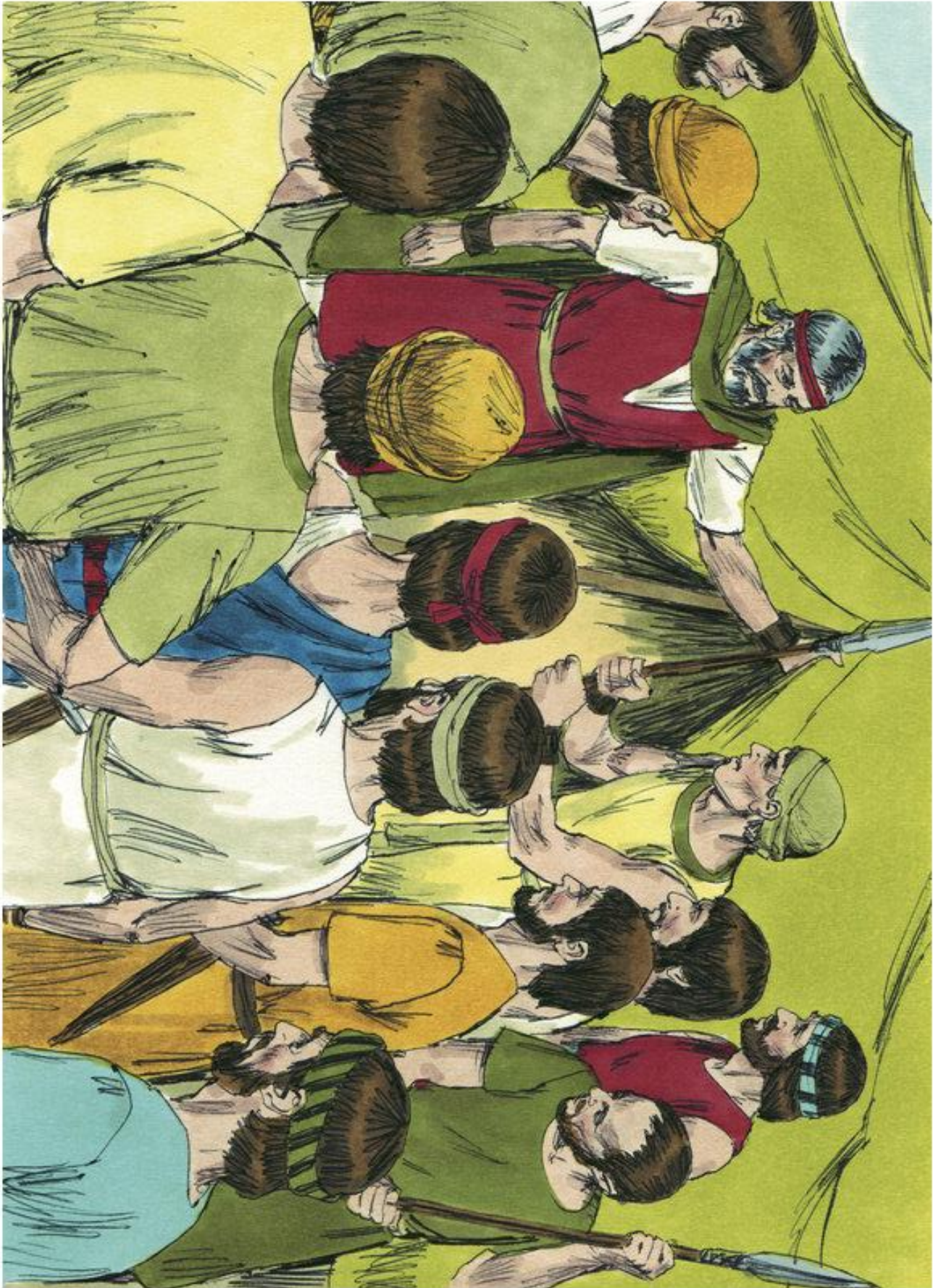
- Have students make their own cauliflower sheep snack by connecting florets with toothpicks as instructed at https://vbs.cph.org/2016/downloads/Snacks_Lesson1.pdf.



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