

THE JPS TORAH COMMENTARY

NUMBERS **במדבר**



EXCURSUS 69

The Literary Structure of Chapter 32

The literary cement that binds this chapter into a unified whole is the sevenfold recurrence of five key terms, as follows: (1) *Gad and Reuben*, in this order (vv. 2,6,25,29,31,33,34/37). This may explain why the eighth mention of the tribes contains the reverse order (v. 1) so that the septenary pattern would not be broken; (2) *'ahuzzah/naḥalah*, "holding/share" (vv. 5,8,19,22,29,32[2]); (3) *'avar*, "cross" the Jordan (vv. 5,7,21,27,29,30,32); (4) *nehelats, ḥaluts*, "be picked, shock-troops" (vv. 17,20,21,26,29,30,32); (5) *lifnei YHVH*, "before the Lord" (vv. 20,21,22[2],27,29,32). These five terms, in effect, summarize the chapter: If *Gad*

and Reuben cross (the Jordan) as the *vanguard before the Lord* (the Ark), they will receive the *land holdings* (they desire). Another literary device characterizing the entire chapter is the alternation of positive and negative statements (vv. 12–13, 17–18, 19a–b, 20–23, 29–30).¹

The unity of this chapter is further revealed by its introverted structure, as follows:

A. *Gad and Reuben Request Land in Transjordan* (vv. 1–6)

1. They specify nine towns (vv. 1–5)
 2. Moses rejects the request (v. 6)
- [scout episode] [vv. 7–15]

B. *Their Compromise Proposal is Revised by Moses* (vv. 16–24)

1. The two tribes' compromise (vv. 16–19)
2. Moses accepts it, requiring a double condition/oath (vv. 20–24)

X. *Gad and Reuben Accept Moses' Revisions* (vv. 25–27)

B'. *Moses' Revised Proposal is Offered the Leaders* (vv. 28–32)

1. Consequence changes if double condition/oath is rejected (vv. 28–30)
2. Gad and Reuben repeat their acceptance (vv. 31–32)

A'. *Moses Provisionally Grants Land in Transjordan* (vv. 33–38)

1. The grant [includes half-Manassah] (v. 33)
2. Gad and Reuben rebuild fourteen towns (vv. 34–38)
- [3. Manassite clans Yair and Nobah conquer and rename towns, and Machir settles in its conquered land] [vv. 39–42]

The chapter subdivides into five sections, ABXB'A'. The two bracketed items, Moses' exhortation (vv. 7–15) and the Manassite pericope (vv. 39–42), are interpolations, although the former, containing one of the seven occurrences of *'avar*, has been inserted by the chapter's author.

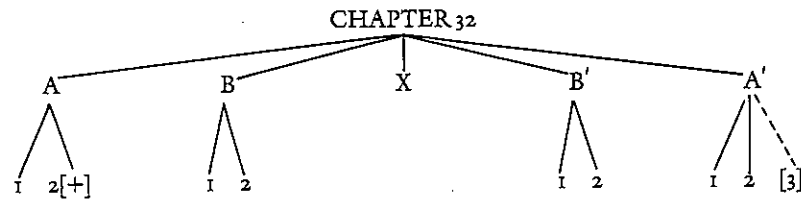
The introverted scheme becomes apparent when parallel sections are compared. AA' (vv. 1–6, 33–38) frame the chapter in an inclusion: Gad and Reuben request that they be given (*yuttan*; v. 5) specified towns (v. 3) and they are given (*va-yitten*; v. 33) these towns and more (vv. 34–38). B is a self-contained section with its own inclusion, chiasmically arranged (vv. 16, 24). Its structure is further illumined by its mirroring in B'. Furthermore, sections BB' (vv. 16–24, 28–32) form an inner chiasm in subject, content, and style, as follows:

- B₁. Gad and Reuben's proposal (vv. 16–19)
 B₂. Moses' revised proposal (vv. 20–24)
 B'₂. Moses' revised proposal (vv. 28–30)
 B'₁. Gad and Reuben accept (vv. 31–32)

Units B₁B'₁ contain the parallel phrases *ba'ah nahalatenu me-'ever* (v. 19), *'ittanu . . . nahalatenu me-'ever* (v. 32). Units B₂B'₂ both contain the double condition that Moses recites first to Gad and Reuben privately and then before the leaders (vv. 20–24, 28–30); and, of course, they show the same vocabulary, especially the key terms in the septenary pattern: *'avar*, *haluts*, *lifnei YHVH*, *'ahuzzah/nahalah*. This structure sheds light on the need for Moses to state his proposal twice (vv. 20–24, 28–30; B₂B'₂) and for Gad and Reuben to accept twice (vv. 16–19, 31–32). To be sure, the second time around the proposal is put before the rest of the leadership (v. 28) and the consequences of nonfulfillment are spelled out: Gad and Reuben must settle in Canaan (v. 30). But the repetition of the terms

by Moses and by Gad and Reuben would be superfluous unless it is to answer the requirements of the structure by creating a symmetry of introversion. Here, then, is a clear example where aesthetics alone determines the composition.

The subdivisions of this chapter would appear diagrammatically as follows:



Section X (vv. 25–27) is the true center of the chapter since it expresses Gad and Reuben's full acceptance of the revisions Moses has entered into their proposal. This acceptance is underscored by the twice-repeated *ka'asher 'adoni metsarveh/dover*, "as my lord commands/orders" (vv. 25, 27). Moreover, only here is given the full inventory of those who will remain behind (v. 26). Again, the key septenary terms make their appearance here: *'avar*, *haluts*, Gad-Reuben, and *lifnei YHVH*. Other common terms interlock it with the other sections: Gilead (v. 25; cf. vv. 1, 39–40, AA'); *milhamah*, "war" (v. 27; cf. vv. 6, 20, 29, ABB'); *'avadekha*, "your servants" (vv. 25, 27; cf. vv. 5, 31, AB'); and *tappenu, mikhenu*, "our dependents, our cattle" (v. 26; cf. v. 16, B). Furthermore, if, as suggested, we read: *'asher dibber 'adoni ken na'aseh*, "whatever my lord has spoken, that we will do" (v. 31, B'), it becomes the chiastically worded ballast to the equivalent phrases in X (vv. 25, 27).

The language of the bulge (vv. 7–15) is mainly Deuteronomic, as indicated by the following: (1) Kadesh-barnea (v. 8) is the name of the site that characterizes the Deuteronomic school (Deut. 1:19; 2:14; 9:23; Josh. 10:41; 14:6–7; but see the Comment to 36:4); (2) "going up to the wadi Eshcol" (v. 9; Deut. 1:24); (3) "none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite . . . for they remained loyal to the LORD" (v. 12; Deut. 4:25; 9:18). It thus seems likely that a Deuteronomic editor summarized the full account of the scout expedition (chaps. 13–14) but used his own language. If so, it would be the last editorial hand to rework this chapter, a further indication that the priestly redaction of Numbers that was responsible for chapters 13–14 (see Excursus 29) was earlier (see the Introduction). The Manassite intrusions, which stem from a different hand and not from the author of this chapter, are discussed in Excursus 70.²

Gad and Reuben Receive Land in the Transjordan: A Documentary Approach

[thetorah.com/gad-and-reuben-receive-land-in-the-transjordan-a-documentary-approach/](https://www.thetorah.com/gad-and-reuben-receive-land-in-the-transjordan-a-documentary-approach/)

Gad and Reuben Receive Land in the Transjordan: A Documentary Approach

The tribes of Reuben and Gad ask Moses for permission to settle in the Transjordan (Num 32). A look at this lengthy narrative, what exactly they request and what Moses answers, uncovers several contradictions and inconsistencies. Separating the contradictory elements in the story allows for the identification of two parallel accounts.^[1]

Dr. Liane Feldman



The the army of the twelve tribes, with Moses, the Levites and the Tabernacle. (Partial view) Jan Luyken, 1700. Amsterdam Museum

Numbers 32 tells the story of the apportionment of the Transjordan to two of the twelve tribes, the Reubenites and the Gadites. The basic outline of this story is relatively straightforward: as the Israelites are getting ready to enter the land of Canaan, the leaders of the two tribes ask Moses if they can inhabit the land east of the Jordan River instead of Canaan itself.

When the Reubenites and Gadites ask Moses to grant them the Transjordanian land, their request has two parts, one immediate and one long-term. Their long-term request is to settle east of the Jordan River, rather than in Canaan with the other ten tribes. In the short-term, they want to leave

their women, children, and livestock in the Transjordan to keep them safe while their men of fighting age help the rest of the Israelites conquer Canaan. Moses agrees.

Beyond this broadest summary of the story, however, the narrative coherence of the chapter begins to break down. There are contradictions within the story about crucial details of the agreement between Moses and the two tribes.

The methodological approach I am using is known as the neo-documentary hypothesis. It takes as its starting point the idea that a text is a literary unity, and only when the narrative breaks down is it necessary to begin hypothesizing the presence of multiple authors. Examples of narrative breakdown include when characters or the narrator act without knowledge of what they have said or done moments before, a sudden and unexplained change in the personality of a character, or inconsistency in the story's timeline or in the presentation of space in the story world.^[2]

1. When and from Whom Did Reuben and Gad Receive Their Land?

After the tribes make their request, Moses tells them that they will only be given the land as their inheritance (אחזה) *after* they help the Israelites conquer Canaan. While they can leave their women, children, and livestock behind, they have no right to permanently settle in the land until after they help conquer Canaan. Moreover, Joshua will be the one to give them the land (32:28–30):

במדבר לבכח ויצו להם משה את אלעזר הכהן
ואת יהושע בן נון ואת ראשי אבות המטות
לכני ישראלי. ויאמר משה אליהם אם
יעברו בני גד ובני ראובן אתכם את הירדן כל
חלוץ למלחמה לפני יהוה ונקבשה הארץ
לפניכם ונתתם להם את ארץ הגלעד לאחזה.
לבג ואם לא יעברו חלוצים אתכם ונאחזו
בתקדם בארץ בנימן.

Num 32:28 Moses then instructed Elazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the Israelite tribes, ^{32:29} and Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and the Reubenites cross over the Jordan with you, all of them equipped for battle before YHWH, and the land is subdued before you, then you will give them the land of Gilead as their inheritance. ^{32:30} But if they do not cross over equipped for war with you, then they will inherit with you in the land of Canaan."

But then, only moments later in the story, after the Reubenites and Gadites enthusiastically agree to Moses's conditions, Moses himself gives the Transjordanian land to the two tribes—and this happens before they ever set foot in Canaan (v. 33):

במדבר לבג ויתן להם משה לבני גד ולבני
ראובן ולחצי שבט מנשה בן יוסף את
ממלכת סיחון מלך האמורי ואת ממלכת עוג
מלך הבשן הארץ לעריה בגבול ערי
הארץ סביב

Num 32:33 Then Moses gave them—to the Gadites, the Reubenites, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph^[3]—the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land and its cities, along with the cities of the surrounding land.

What happened to Moses's condition that the tribes help conquer Canaan before taking ownership of the Transjordan? Why does he give it to them now?

The question of when and by whom the land is given appears again in Joshua 22, which narrates the fulfillment of Moses' command according to Num 32:28–30. Joshua summons the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh and tells the two and a half tribes that they have fulfilled their obligations, and that they may settle in the Transjordan as they had requested. He then gives

the tribes their permanent inheritance (אחזה) in the Transjordan.^[4] This part of the story makes little sense if Moses has already granted them permanent possession of the land, as described in Num 32:33.

So which is it? Does Joshua follow Moses' instructions and allow the Reubenites and Gadites to permanently settle in the Transjordan after Canaan is conquered? Or did Moses himself give it to them right away, based on their promise to help?

2. The Conquests of the Transjordan and the Resulting Landscape

In Num 32:33, Moses gave the two tribes "the land **and its cities**, and all the cities in the surrounding land" (הָאֶרֶץ לְעָרֶיהָ בְּגִבְלֹת עָרֵי הָאֶרֶץ סָבִיב). Immediately after that, the narrator describes the Reubenites and Gadites building cities and towns in the Transjordan to house their women, children, and flocks (Num 32:34–38). Why would they need to build cities if the cities already exist?

The problem here can be traced back even further in the Pentateuch—what happened when the Israelites conquered the Transjordan? There are two different stories about the conquest of the Transjordan in Numbers, found in chapter 21 and chapter 31.

It is relatively common in the Pentateuch for sources to use different names to refer to the same geographical region. In this case both Midian (Num 31) and Amorite (Num 21) are terms used to describe the whole Transjordanian region.^[5]

Numbers 21: In Num 21, the Israelites conquered the kingdoms of Sihon and Og, killed the inhabitants of those cities, and then settled in the cities.

במדבר כא:כה וַיִּקַּח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל עָרֵי הָאֱמֹרִי בְּהֶשְׁבֹן וּבְכָל
בְּנֵי עִירָהּ.

Num 21:25 Israel took all those towns. And Israel settled **in all the towns** of the Amorites, in Heshbon and all its dependencies.

The Israelite settlement in the Transjordan is repeated in v. 31, though without the explicit mention of cities:

במדבר כא:לא וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ הָאֱמֹרִי. Num 21:31 And Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.^[6]

By the time the two tribes approach Moses in Num 32, the Israelites have been living in the Transjordan. Thus, the two tribes are speaking about remaining in cities where the Israelites have already settled.

Yet this contradicts the implication of what the two tribes suggested to Moses just a few verses earlier:

במדבר לב:טז ...גְּדֵרֹת צֹאן נִבְנֶה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹה
וְעָרִים לְטִפְסָנוּ.

Num 32:16 ...We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children.

Furthermore, after granting them permission to settle in the (pre-existing) cities, Moses then says:

במדבר לבכד בְּנֵי לְכֶם עָרִים לְטֹפְכֶם וּגְדֵרֹת
לְצִנְאָכֶם...

Num 32:24 Build towns for your children and folds for your
sheep...

If they have been settled in the Transjordanian cities and towns already, why would they need to build cities now? The need to build cities assumes a landscape without cities.

Numbers 31: Another account of the conquest of the Transjordan appears in Numbers 31. In this account, the Israelites destroy all of the settled cities and towns of the Midianite inhabitants:

במדבר לא: וְאֵת כָּל עָרֵיהֶם בְּמוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם וְאֵת
כָּל טִירָתָם שָׂרְפוּ בָּאֵשׁ.

Num 31:10 And they destroyed by fire all the towns in which they were
settled, and all their fortified encampments.

When the Reubenites and Gadites ask to build sheepfolds and towns in v. 16, and then do so in Num 32:34–38, it is because no such structures exist in the Transjordan.^[7] Immediately prior to the events of Numbers 32, the Israelites destroyed the cities that stood in the Transjordan. Before the Reubenites and Gadites can leave their women, children, and flocks behind to go to war, they must rebuild.

Other Contradictions

A number of other contradictions and inconsistencies in Numbers 32 suggest this is a composite text which divides into an Elohist and a Priestly strand (see further on). Careful attention to them helps disentangle the two separate strands present in this chapter.

A. Where are the Israelites during this episode?

Elohistic – Within the Transjordanian land being requested (32:1–2 and 20:31)

Priestly – The steppes of Moab, outside of the Transjordanian land being requested (see vv. 34–38 and 31:12).

B. Who initiates the promise?

Elohistic – The Reubenites and Gadites take it upon themselves, as part of their request, to offer to lead the Israelites into battle (vv. 17–18)

Priestly – The Reubenites and Gadites simply ask for the land. Moses has to impose the condition that they accompany the Israelites to war (vv. 6, 20–22).

C. What happens if the Reubenites and Gadites fail to help the Israelites conquer Canaan?

Elohistic – They will have committed a sin, and they will be subject to some form of divine punishment (v. 23).

Priestly – No sin is mentioned, and they will be forced to inherit land in Canaan alongside the Israelites, rather than in the Transjordan as they have requested (v. 30).

D. Where in the military formation do the Reubenites and Gadites march?

Elohistic – The Reubenites and Gadites are the vanguard, leading all of the Israelites into war (v. 17).

Priestly – The Reubenites and Gadites fight לפני י-הוה, before YHWH (v. 29), a direct reference to the military formation described in Num 2, where the Reubenites and Gadites are positioned just in front of the Levites who carry the Tabernacle and its accoutrements.^[8]

A Documentary Solution

The presence of these inconsistencies and contradictions has led centuries of scholars to argue that Num 32 is a composite text, the product of more than one author.^[9] In each of the issues I raised above, two different and opposing options are presented. In my view, separating these contradictory elements in the story allows for the identification of two parallel accounts of the apportionment of the Transjordan to the Reubenites and Gadites, each of which draws on narrative claims made by E and P elsewhere in the Pentateuch.^[10]

In the Elohist story, the Israelites conquer the kingdom of Sihon and Og in the Transjordan, destroying only the inhabitants, but not the cities (Num 21: 31, 35). Shortly before the Israelites set out to conquer Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites approach Moses to ask if they can settle in the Transjordan, rather than receive an inheritance in Canaan alongside the other ten tribes. They promise to help with the conquest. Moses agrees, but explains that if the two tribes fail to cross the Jordan to help with the conquest, they will have sinned against YHWH and they will be subject to divine punishment (v. 23). Then, trusting their promise to help with the conquest, Moses gives the Reubenites and the Gadites their lands in the Transjordan before the Israelites cross the Jordan to begin conquering Canaan (v. 33).

This story is the shorter of the two stories in Num 32, but there are a number of connections with other narratives in the Pentateuch. First and foremost, it presupposes the conquest of the kingdoms Sihon and Og, a story told in Num 20–21.^[11] In both Num 20–21 and Num 32, YHWH is almost entirely absent, particularly when it comes to discussions concerning the military campaign. This stands in stark contrast to other pentateuchal texts describing military campaigns with YHWH either leading the charge or in the center of the battle formation.

The presence of the descendants of Machir, son of Manasseh, links this story to Gen 50:23, an Elohist text that legitimates Manasseh as a tribe of Israel and sets the stage for their ability to inherit land as such in Num 32. A corroborating piece of evidence is that only the Elohist and Priestly sources refer to individual tribes after the time of Joseph. The Yahwistic source speaks only of a single entity, Israel.

In the Priestly story, the Israelites conquer the Midianite lands (in the Transjordan), and destroy the cities and towns by burning them (Num 31:10). Shortly before continuing their campaign into Canaan, the Gadites and Reubenites ask Moses if they can have the Transjordan as their allotted portion. Moses agrees, but with a major caveat: the Gadites and Reubenites will receive the Transjordanian land only after they help to subdue Canaan (vv. 20–22, 28–29). If they fail to join their fellow-tribes in subduing Canaan, they will not be given the Transjordanian land, but will instead inherit in Canaan alongside the rest of the Israelites (v. 30). Because they have destroyed the Midianite land, the tribes must rebuild the cities and towns before they can be inhabited by the women, children, and flocks.

There are a number of elements of this story that connect to other Priestly texts in the Pentateuch. The description of the battle formation and the place of the Reubenites and Gadites before YHWH (לפני י-הוה) aligns perfectly with the description of the camp and military movements in Num 2. This story also assumes the complete destruction of the Transjordanian lands, something that occurs only in Num 31.

When the two tribes ask Moses to permit them to build cities and sheepfolds so they can leave behind their families and cattle, they justify that request by referencing the "inhabitants of the land" (Num 32:17). The context for this reference can be found in the priestly story of the spies in Num 13–14. In Num 13:32, the spies tell Moses that the inhabitants of the land of Canaan are of an unusually large size. Shortly thereafter, the Israelites express their concern that their wives and children will be taken as plunder, presumably by these unusually large people (14:3).

Conclusion

There are two parallel accounts of the apportionment of the Transjordan to the Reubenites and Gadites in Numbers 32. The major difference between these two stories is the approach Moses takes to adjudicating their request. In the E story, the tribes enthusiastically offer to fight alongside the Israelites, and Moses quickly grants them their request for the land before the battle has even begun. This kind of interaction is fitting. There is no E version of the spies story, and these Israelites have never expressed dismay or doubt as to their ability to conquer the land. Moreover, they have not been wandering in the desert for 40 years; these are the same people who were led out of Egypt. Their enthusiasm has not flagged over a generation of wilderness wandering.

In the P story, Moses imposes a number of conditions on the two tribes, and delays granting their request until YHWH's plan for the conquest of the promise land is fulfilled. This is, in part, a reflection of the characterization of the YHWH in the Priestly narrative: once a command has been given, it must be fulfilled exactly. Each and every command in the Priestly narrative has a corresponding fulfillment notice.

The conquest of the land is no different, and if the Reubenites and Gadites want to alter that plan, they must first do what they have been commanded. This is precisely what they do when they agree to fight "before YHWH" in accordance with the order prescribed in Numbers 2, and when they respond to Moses in Num 32:31, saying: "whatever YHWH has spoken concerning your servants, that we will do!"

Appendix

Full Division of the Two Stories in Numbers 32

Elohistic Story:

¹ וּמִקְנֵה רֹב הָיָה לְבְנֵי רָאוּבֵן וּלְבְנֵי גָד עֲצוּם
 מְאֹד וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ יַעֲזֵר וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ גִּלְעָד
 וְהִנֵּה הַמָּקוֹם מְקוֹם מִקְנֵה: ² וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 אֶל־מֹשֶׁה ⁴ הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה יְהוָה לִפְנֵי עַדְתִּי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶרֶץ מִקְנֵה הוּא וּלְעִבְדֶּיךָ מִקְנֵה ⁵
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִם־תִּצְאָנוּ מִן־בְּעִינֶיךָ אֶל־תַּעֲבָרֵנוּ
 אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן ¹⁷ וְנִנָּחֵנוּ נֹחֲלֵי חַיִּים לִפְנֵי בְנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם־יִבְיָאֲגֻם אֶל־מִקְוָם ¹⁸
 לֹא נָשׁוּב אֶל־בְּתֵינֵנוּ עַד הַתְּנַחֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אִישׁ נִחְלָתוֹ ¹⁹ כִּי לֹא נִנָּחַל אִתָּם מִעַבְרֵ לַיַּרְדֵּן
 וְהִלָּאָה כִּי בָאָה נִחְלָמֵנוּ אֵלֵינוּ מִעַבְרֵ הַיַּרְדֵּן
 מִזֶּרְחָה ²⁰ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵיהֶם חֹשֶׁה אִם־תַּעֲשׂוּן
 אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה ²² וְהָיִיתֶם נֹקִיִּים מִיְּהוָה
 וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל ²³ וְאִם־לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן הִנֵּה חֲסֹאֲתֵם
 לַיהוָה וְדָעוּ חֲסֹאֲתֵכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אִתְּכֶם ²⁴
 וְהִיצָא מִפִּיכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּן ³³ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם חֹשֶׁה
 אֶת־מַחְלַקַת סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֲמֹרִי וְאֶת־מַחְלַקַת
 עֹוג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן הָאֶרֶץ לַעֲרִיָּה בְּגִבְלַת עָרֵי
 הָאֶרֶץ סְבִיב ³⁹ וַיָּלֶכּוּ בְנֵי מַכִּיר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה
 גִּלְעָד וַיִּלְכְּדוּ וַיֹּרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר־בָּהָ ⁴⁰
 וַיִּתֵּן חֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד לְמַכִּיר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיָּשֻׁב
 בָּהָ ⁴¹ וַיֵּאִיר בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה הַלֵּךְ וַיִּלְכֹּד
 אֶת־חֲמוֹתֵיהֶם וַיִּקְרָא אֶתְּהֶן חֲמוֹת יֵאִיר ⁴² וַנִּבַּח
 הַלֵּךְ וַיִּלְכֹּד אֶת־קִנָּת וְאֶת־בְּנֵיהָ וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ
 נִבַּח בְּשֵׁמָהּ:

¹ The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very large numbers and they saw that the lands of Jazer were good cattle land, ² and they said to Moses ⁴ "The land that YHWH has conquered for the community of Israel is cattle country, and your servants have cattle." ⁵ They said, "If we find favor in your eyes, do not move us across the Jordan. ¹⁷ We will hasten to fight at the head of all the Israelites until we have established them in their home, ¹⁸ and we will not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites is in possession of his portion. ¹⁹ But we will not have a share with them in the territory beyond the Jordan, for we have received our share on the east side of the Jordan." ²⁰ Moses said to them, "If you do this, ²² you shall be clear before YHWH and before Israel, ²³ But if you do not do so, then you will have sinned against YHWH; and know that your sin will overtake you. ²⁴ Do what you have promised." ³³ Then Moses gave to them the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land with its various cities and the territories of their surrounding towns. ³⁹ The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, dispossessing the Amorites who were there. ⁴⁰ Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. ⁴¹ Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, which he renamed Havvoth-jair. ⁴² And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its dependencies, renaming it Nobah after himself.

Priestly Story:

² וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־גַד וּבְנֵי רְעוּבֵן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה
וְאֶל־אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶל־נְשִׂיאֵי הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר:³
עָטְרוֹת וְדִיבֹן וַיַּעְזֵר וְנִמְרָה וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן וְאֶלְעָלָה
וְשֶׁבָם וְנֶבֹה וְבִעֹן:⁵ יִתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
לְעַבְדֶּיךָ לְאֻחֲזָה⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי־גַד וּלְבְנֵי
רְעוּבֵן הָאֲחִיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמַלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ
פֹה:¹⁶ וַיִּגָּשׁוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ גְדֵרְתָּ צֹאן נֶכְנֶה
לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹה וְעָרִים לְטָפְנוּ:¹⁷ וַיֵּשֶׁב טָפְנוּ בְּעָרֵי
הַמִּבְצָר מִפְּנֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם
מֹשֶׁה אִם־תִּתְחַלְצוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְמַלְחָמָה:²¹
וְעָבַר לָכֶם כָּל־חַלּוּץ אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַד
הוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת־אֹיְבֵי מִפְּנֵי:²² וְנִכְבְּשָׁה הָאָרֶץ
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְאַחֵר תֵּשְׁבוּ וְהִיְתָה הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
לָכֶם לְאֻחֲזָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:²⁴ בְּנוּ־לָכֶם עָרִים
לְטָפְכֶם וְגְדֵרְתָּ לְצִנְאָכֶם וְהִיצֵא מִפִּיכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ:²⁵
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי־גַד וּבְנֵי רְעוּבֵן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר
עַבְדֶּיךָ יַעֲשׂוּ כְאֲשֶׁר אָדֹנִי מִצְוָה:²⁶ טָפְנוּ נָשִׁינוּ
מִקְנֵנוּ וְכָל־בְּהֶמְתָּנוּ יְהִי־שֵׁם בְּעָרֵי הַגִּלְעָד:²⁷
וְעַבְדֶּיךָ יַעֲבְרוּ כָל־חַלּוּץ עִבָּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
לְמַלְחָמָה כְּאֲשֶׁר אָדֹנִי דָּבָר:²⁸ וַיֵּצֵאוּ לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה
אֶת אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן
וְאֶת־רָאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הַמִּטּוֹת לָבְנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל:²⁹
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵיהֶם אִם־יַעֲבְרוּ בְנֵי־גַד
וּבְנֵי־רְעוּבֵן אִתְּכֶם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן כָּל־חַלּוּץ
לְמַלְחָמָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְנִכְבְּשָׁה הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵיכֶם
וְנִתְּתָם לָהֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד לְאֻחֲזָה:³⁰
וְאִם־לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ חַלּוּצִים אִתְּכֶם וְנִאֲחֲזוּ בְּתוֹכְכֶם
בְּהָאָרֶץ קָנְעוּ:³¹ וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־גַד וּבְנֵי רְעוּבֵן לֵאמֹר
אֶת אֲשֶׁר דָּבָר יְהוָה אֶל־עַבְדֶּיךָ כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה:³²
נִחְנוּ נַעֲבֹר חַלּוּצִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶרֶץ קָנְעוּ
וְאַתְּנָנוּ אֲחֻזֹּת נַחֲלָתָנוּ מֵעַבְרָ לַיַּרְדֵּן:³⁴ וַיִּבְנוּ
בְנֵי־גַד אֶת־דִּיבֹן וְאֶת־עָטְרוֹת וְאֶת עֲרֹעֵר:³⁵
וְאֶת־עָטְרוֹת שׁוּפָן וְאֶת־יַעְזֵר וְנִגְבָּהָה:³⁶
וְאֶת־בֵּית נִמְרָה וְאֶת־בֵּית הָרֶן עָרֵי מִבְצָר
וְגְדֵרְתָּ צֹאן:³⁷ וּבְנֵי רְעוּבֵן בָּנוּ אֶת־חֶשְׁבּוֹן
וְאֶת־אֶלְעָלָה וְאֶת קִרְיָתִים:³⁸ וְאֶת־נֶבֹה
וְאֶת־בַּעַל מְעוֹן מוֹסֶבֶת שֵׁם וְאֶת־שֶׁבָם
וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּשֵׁמֹת הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ:

² The Gadites and the Reubenites came and they said to Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and the chieftains of the community,³ "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon,⁵ let this land be given to your servants as a holding."⁶ Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites, "Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here?"¹⁶ Then they approached him and said, "We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children and our children stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land."²⁰ Moses said to them, if you go to battle to fight before YHWH,²¹ and every fighter among you crosses the Jordan before YHWH, until he has dispossessed his enemies before him,²² and the land has been subdued before YHWH and then you return, and then this land shall be your holding before YHWH.²⁴ Build towns for your children and sheepfolds for your flocks."²⁵ The Gadites and the Reubenites answered Moses, "Your servants will do as my lord commands."²⁶ Our children, our wives, our flocks, and all our other livestock will stay behind in the towns of Gilead;²⁷ while your servants, all those recruited for war, cross over before YHWH to engage in battle as my lord orders."²⁸ Then Moses gave instructions concerning them to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the family heads of the Israelite tribes.²⁹ Moses said to them, "If every fighter among the Gadites and the Reubenites crosses the Jordan with you to do battle before YHWH and the land is subdued before you, you shall give them the land of Gilead as a holding."³⁰ But if they do not cross over with you to fight, then they shall receive holdings among you in the land of Canaan."³¹ The Gadites and the Reubenites said in reply, "Whatever YHWH has spoken concerning your servants, that we will do."³² We ourselves will cross over to fight before YHWH, into the land of Canaan; and we shall keep our hereditary holding across the Jordan."³⁴ The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,³⁵ Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah,³⁶ Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran as fortified towns or as enclosures for flocks.³⁷ The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,³⁸ Nebo, Baal-meon — some names being changed — and Sibmah; they gave names to towns that they rebuilt.

For a full source division of Numbers 32 with color coding, see [PDF](#)

Dr. Liane Feldman is Assistant Professor (as of September 1, 2018) in New York University's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from The University of Chicago, M.A.s from Yale University and Boston College, and a B.A. from Northeastern University. Feldman's research aims to understand the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish texts through the lenses of literary theory, ritual studies, and the methods of historical criticism, focusing primarily on the Pentateuch and the priestly literature. She is the author of, "The



Composition of Numbers 32: A New Proposal" (*Vetus Testamentum*) and "Ritual Sequence and Narrative Constraints in Leviticus 9:1–10:3" (*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*).

07/11/2018

[1] For a more detailed analysis of this chapter and all of the contradictions in it, see my longer article: Liane Marquis, "The Composition of Numbers 32: A New Proposal," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 408–432.

[2] This approach is used by a number of scholars, most notably Baruch Schwartz, Joel Baden, Jeffrey Stackert, Simeon Chavel, and Philip Yoo. Of these, only Baden has written in any detail on Num 32, and his analysis differs from mine. See Joel S. Baden, *J, E, & the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (FAT 68; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 141–153. Editor's note: For a supplementary approach to the story, see Jacob L. Wright, "Redacting the Relationship to the Transjordanian Tribes," *TheTorah.com* (2014); Itamar Kislev, *On the Threshold of the Promised Land* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2013), 106–124 [Hebrew].

[3] The addition of the half-tribe of Manasseh in this clause is one that has been discussed at length by scholars, both ancient and modern. Most modern scholars, myself included, suggest that this clause is a late redactional insertion in the chapter. See, for example, Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition Des Hexateuchs Und Der Historischen Bücher Des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1899), 349; Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 216–218; Ludwig Schmidt, "Die Ansiedlung von Ruben und Gad im Ostjordanland" *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 114 (2002): 506. For a more detailed discussion of this redactional insertion, see Marquis, "The Composition of Numbers 32," 421 n. 36.

[4] See also the final granting of the land in Joshua:

יהושע כבא אז יקרא יהושע לראובני ולגדי ולמנשי מטה מנשה. כבב ויאמר אליהם אתם שמרתם את כל אשר צוה אתכם משה עבד יהוה ונתשמעו בקולי לכל אשר צויתי אתכם... ככד ועתה הניח יהוה אלהיכם לאחיכם כאשר דבר להם ועתה פנו ולכו לכם לאחליכם אל ארץ אחרתכם אשר נתן לכם משה עבד יהוה בעבר סיני... ככו ויברכם יהושע וישלחם וילכו אל אהליהם...

Josh 22:1 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ^{22:2} and said to them, "You have observed all that Moses the servant of YHWH commanded you, and have obeyed me in everything that I commanded you... ^{22:4} Now YHWH your God has given your kinsmen rest, as He promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents, to the land of your holdings beyond the Jordan that Moses the servant of YHWH assigned to you..." ⁶ Then Joshua blessed them and dismissed them, and they went to their tents.

[5] For discussion of this example and others, see Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 222.

[6] A similar thing same is reported about the conquest of the Bashan from Og (Num 21:35), though there it only says, "they inherited his land" (וַיִּירְשׁוּ אֶת אֶרְצוֹ).

[7] Numbers 21 discusses the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og (Moabite and Amorite territory) whereas Num 31 discusses the conquest of Midianite territory. In Num 32, a number of cities are mentioned by name. Not all of these cities can be definitively located. The two stories that I have identified in this chapter refer to similar geographical areas, but in most cases use different names for those areas. The region of Gilead is mentioned in both accounts, but it is not clear that

the two accounts agree as to its exact location. In vv. 26, 29 Gilead is referred to as the general region east of the Jordan River, and it is described as land that has been conquered and is about to be rebuilt. In vv. 39–40, Gilead is a specific region that has not yet been conquered.

[8] In P, לפני י-הוה generally means “before the Tabernacle.” See, e.g., Exod 28 (*passim*) and many other places.

[9] See, for example, Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen*

Bücher des alten Testaments (Berlin, 1889); S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed. (International Critical Commentary 3; Edinburgh, 1902); J. Licht, *Perush 'al Sefer be-Midbar* vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1985); Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft; Berlin:de Gruyter, 1990); Baruch Levine, *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible 4b; New Haven: Doubleday, 2000).

[10] Verses 7–15 cannot be attributed to either of the two stories and they were likely added by the compiler of the Pentateuch who put these stories together, as has long been argued by many scholars. These verses contain elements of all four pentateuchal sources, along with elements found only in Joshua. For example, in Num 32:9, the idea that Caleb and Joshua are spared belongs to P, but the idea that they were spared because of their loyalty is found only in the Yahwistic account (Num 14:24). Joshua is referred to as a Kennizite in Num 32:12, which can only be found in Josh 14:6,14. Further, Kadesh Barnea, cited in 32:8, is a location mentioned only in Deuteronomy (specifically 1:29). For a more detailed argument about Num 32:7–15 as a late insertion, see Joel Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 143.

[12] See v. 1 for an example of this, and for a full discussion of the phenomenon and rationale, see Marquis, “The Composition of Numbers 32,” 420–421.

[13] For more detailed discussion of the features that mark this passage as post-compilational, and prevent it from being attributed to either source, see Marquis, “The Composition of Numbers 32,” 429–431.

Copyright 2017 TheTorah.com - A Historical and Contextual Approach

-
-
-

Full text of Numbers 32 with the two narratives color-coded

What follows is the running text of Num 32 divided into its sources, both in a color-coded system and in a font-style system for those who are color-blind. The **Elohistic (E) source** is green and normal weight font. The **Priestly (P) source** is red and bold. Text that is in black and underlined was present in both sources, and the compiler of these two sources omitted one occurrence. Text in italics was *added by the same compiler in order to help harmonize the* differences in the stories. Finally, vv. 7–15 have long been recognized having been added to the chapter after the two stories have been combined. I have put these verses in *outline script*.

¹וּמִקֵּנָה רַב הָיָה לִבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וּלְבְנֵי-גָד עָצוּם מְאֹד וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ גִּלְעָד וְהָנָה הַמִּקּוֹם מִקּוֹם מִקְנֵה ²
**וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי-גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶל-נָשִׂיאֵי הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר ³עֲטֹרוֹת וְדִבֹּן וַיַּעֲזֹר וְנִמְרָה
וְחִשְׁבּוֹן וְאֶלְעֵלָה וְשִׁבְעָם וְנָבֹ וְנֶעֱנִין ⁴הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה יְהוָה לִפְנֵי עַדְתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶרֶץ מִקְנָה הוּא וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ מִקְנָה ⁵וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אִם-מִצְאֵנוּ חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ יִתֵּן אֶת-הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לַעֲבָדֶיךָ לְאֶחָהּ אֶל-תַּעֲבֹרֵנוּ אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן ⁶וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי-גָד וּלְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן
הַאֲחִיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמִלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה ⁷וְלָמָּה תִּנְיָאוּן אֶת-לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבְרֵי אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה ⁸
פֹּה עָשׂוּ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם בְּשִׁלְחִי אֹתָם מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרַנֵּעַ לְרֹאוֹת אֶת-הָאֶרֶץ ⁹וַיַּעֲלֹ עַד-נַחַל אֲשַׁכּוֹל וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת-הָאֶרֶץ וַיָּנִיאוּ אֶת-
לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבִלְתִּי-רַבָּא אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה ¹⁰וַיַּחֲרֹאף יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּשְׁבַּע לֵאמֹר ¹¹אִם-יֵרְאוּ
הָאֲנָשִׁים הָעֵלִים מִמִּצְרַיִם מִכֹּן עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמִעֵלָה אֶת הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב כִּי לֹא-מָלְאוּ
אֲחֵרֵי ¹²בְּלִיתִי כָלֹב בֶּן-יִפְתָּה הַקִּנְזִי וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹנִן כִּי מָלְאוּ אַחֲרָי יְהוָה ¹³וַיַּחֲרֹאף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנָּעַם בַּמִּדְבָּר אַרְבָּעִים
שָׁנָה עַד-תָּמָס כָּל-הַדּוֹר הָעֹשֶׂה הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה ¹⁴וְהָנָה קִמְתֶּם תַּחַת אֲבֹתֵיכֶם תִּרְבּוּת אֲנָשִׁים חֲסָאִים לְסִפּוֹת עוֹד עַל
חֶרֶן אֹף-יְהוָה אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל ¹⁵כִּי תִשׁוּבוּן מֵאֲחֵרֵי וַיָּסֹף עוֹד לְהַנִּיחוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר וּשְׁחַתֶּם לְכָל-הָעָם הַזֶּה ¹⁶וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ
גִּדְרֹת צֹאן נִבְנָה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֹה וְעָרִים לְטַפְנוּ ¹⁷וַאֲנַחְנוּ נַחֲלֵץ חֲשִׁים לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם-הִבִּיאֵנָם אֶל-מִקְוָמָם
וַיֵּשֶׁב טַפְנוּ בְּעָרֵי הַמִּבְצָר מִפְּנֵי יִשְׁבֵּי הָאֶרֶץ ¹⁸לֹא נָשׁוּבָ אֶל-בְּתִינוּ עַד הַתַּנְחֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ נַחֲלָתוֹ ¹⁹כִּי לֹא נִנְחַל
אֹתָם מֵעַבְרֵי לַיַּרְדֵּן וְהִלָּאָה כִּי בָּאָה נַחֲלָתָנוּ אֵלֵינוּ מֵעַבְרֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזְרָחָהּ ²⁰וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֹשֶׁה אִם-תַּעֲשׂוּן אֶת-הַדְּבָר
הַזֶּה אִם-תַּחֲלֹצוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְמִלְחָמָה ²¹וְעַבְדִּי לָכֶם כָּל-חַיְלֹךְ אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַד הוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת-אִיְקִיּוֹ מִפְּנֵי ²²**

ונכבשה הארץ לפני יהוה ואחר תשובו והייתם נקיים מיהוה ומישראל והייתה הארץ הזאת לכם לאחזה לפני יהוה²³
 ואם לא תעשון כן הנה חטאתם ליהוה ודעו חטאתכם אשר תמצא אתכם²⁴ בגוילכם ערים לטפכם וגדרת לענאכם
 והיצא מפיהם תעשו²⁵ ואמר בניגד ובני ראובן אלמשה לאמר עבדיך יעשו כאשר אדני מצו²⁶ טפנו נשינו מקננו
 וכלבהמתנו יהיושם בערי הגלעד²⁷ ועבדיך יעברו כלחלוץ צבא לפני יהוה למלחמה כאשר אדני דבר²⁸ ויצו להם
 משה את אלעזר הכהן ואת יהושע בןנון ואת ראשי אבות המטות לבני ישראל²⁹ ואמר משה אליהם אם יעברו
 בניגד ובניראובן אתכם אתהידון כלחלוץ למלחמה לפני יהוה ונכבשה הארץ לפניכם ונתתם להם אתארץ
 הגלעד לאחז³⁰ ואם לא יעברו חלוצים אתכם ונאחזו בתככם בארץ כנען³¹ ויענו בניגד ובני ראובן לאמר את אשר
 דבר יהוה אלעבדיך כן נעשה³² נחנו נעבר חלוצים לפני יהוה ארץ כנען ואתנו אחוזת נחלתנו מעבר לירדן³³ ויתן
 להם משה לבניגד ולבני ראובן ולחצי שבט מנשה בןיוסף אתממלכת סיון מלך האמרי ואתממלכת עוג מלך
 הבשן הארץ לעריה בגבלת ערי הארץ סביב³⁴ :ויבנו בניגד אתדיבן ואתעטרת ואתערער³⁵ ואתעטרת שופן
 ואתיעור ונגבה³⁶ ואתבית נמרה ואתבית הרן ערי מבצר וגדרת צאן³⁷ ובני ראובן בנו אתחשבון ואתאלעל
 ואת קרייתים³⁸ ואתנבו ואת בעל מעון מוסבת שם ואתשבבמה ויקראו בשמות אתשמות הערים אשר בנו³⁹ וילכו
 בני מכיר בןמנשה גלעדה וילכדה ויורש אתהאמרי אשרבה⁴⁰ ויתן משה אתהגלעד למכיר בןמנשה וישב בה
 ויאיר בןמנשה הלד וילכד אתחיותיהם ויקרא אתהן חיות יאיר⁴² ונבכ הלד וילכד אתקנת ואתבנתיה ויקרא⁴¹
 לה נבכ בשמו

¹ The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very large numbers and they saw that the
 lands of Jazer and Gilead were good cattle land; ² the Gadites and the Reubenites came and
 they said to Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and the chieftains of the community, ³ “Ataroth,
 Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, ⁴ the land that YHWH has
 conquered for the community of Israel is cattle country, and your servants have cattle.” ⁵ They
 said, “If we find favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a holding; do not
 move us across the Jordan. ⁶ Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites, “Are your
 brothers to go to war while you stay here? ⁷ Why will you turn the minds of the Israelites from crossing into the land that

YHWH has given them? ⁸ That is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to survey the land. ⁹ After going up to the wadi Eshcol and surveying the land, they turned the minds of the Israelites from invading the land that YHWH had given them. ¹⁰ Thereupon YHWH was incensed and He swore, ¹¹ None of the men from twenty years up who came out of Egypt shall see the land that I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they did not remain loyal to Me — ¹² none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they remained loyal to YHWH.’ ¹³ YHWH was incensed at Israel, and for forty years He made them wander in the wilderness, until the whole generation that had provoked YHWH’s displeasure was gone. ¹⁴ And now you, a breed of sinful men, have replaced your fathers, to add still further to YHWH’s wrath against Israel. ¹⁵ If you turn away from Him and He abandons them once more in the wilderness, you will bring calamity upon all this people.” ¹⁶ Then they approached him and said, “We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children. ¹⁷ We will hasten to fight at the head of all the Israelites until we have established them in their home, and our children stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land.” ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until every one of the Israelites is in possession of his portion. ¹⁹ But we will not have a share with them in the territory beyond the Jordan, for we have received our share on the east side of the Jordan.” ²⁰ Moses said to them, “If you do this, if you go to battle to fight before YHWH, ²¹ and every fighter among you crosses the Jordan before YHWH, until he has dispossessed his enemies before him, ²² and the land has been subdued before YHWH and then you return, you shall be clear before YHWH and before Israel, and then this land shall be your holding before YHWH. ²³ But if you do not do so, then you will have sinned against YHWH; and know that your sin will overtake you. ²⁴ Build towns for your children and sheepfolds for your flocks; do what you have promised.” ²⁵ The Gadites and the Reubenites answered Moses, “Your servants will do as my lord commands. ²⁶ Our children, our wives, our flocks, and all our other livestock will stay behind in the towns of Gilead; ²⁷ while your servants, all those recruited for war, cross over before YHWH to engage in battle as my lord orders.” ²⁸ Then Moses gave instructions concerning them to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the family heads of the Israelite

tribes. ²⁹ Moses said to them, “If every fighter among the Gadites and the Reubenites crosses the Jordan with you to do battle before YHWH and the land is subdued before you, you shall give them the land of Gilead as a holding. ³⁰ But if they do not cross over with you to fight, then they shall receive holdings among you in the land of Canaan.” ³¹ The Gadites and the Reubenites said in reply, “Whatever YHWH has spoken concerning your servants, that we will do. ³² We ourselves will cross over to fight before YHWH into the land of Canaan, and we shall keep our hereditary holding across the Jordan.” ³³ Then Moses gave them *to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph* the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land with its various cities and the territories of their surrounding towns. ³⁴ The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵ Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶ Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran as fortified towns or as enclosures for flocks. ³⁷ The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ³⁸ Nebo, Baal-meon — some names being changed — and Sibmah; they gave names to towns that they rebuilt. ³⁹ The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, dispossessing the Amorites who were there. ⁴⁰ Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. ⁴¹ Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, which he renamed Havvoth-jair. ⁴² And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its dependencies, renaming it Nobah after himself.