

# Numbers 32:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

---

**And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones**—Reuben and Gad respond to Moses's rebuke with a proposed compromise. They pledge to secure their possessions first ("sheepfolds for our cattle") and protect their families ("cities for our little ones"), then join the conquest. The Hebrew gidrot (גִּדְרוֹת, sheepfolds) means walled enclosures, and arim (עָרִים, cities) indicates fortified settlements.

Note the order: cattle before children. Some commentators see misplaced priorities here—possessions mentioned before family, both before God's work. However, in verses 24 and 26, the order reverses to children first, suggesting initial thoughtlessness corrected by reflection. Their plan demonstrates practical wisdom in securing dependents before military service, yet Moses requires explicit oath-commitment to prevent the appearance of self-seeking that could demoralize others. This negotiation shows that legitimate provision for family doesn't excuse covenant obligations.

## Historical Context

---

The Transjordan territory (Gilead, Bashan) provided excellent grazing land with adequate rainfall, contrasting with the drier regions west of Jordan that required more intensive agriculture. Reuben and Gad's large herds made this territory attractive. Archaeological evidence shows strong fortified cities in Transjordan during this period, supporting the historical plausibility of their building program.

Later, these tribes did settle this region (Joshua 13:15-28) and built substantial cities.

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

---

1. How can legitimate concerns for family welfare become excuses for avoiding difficult obedience?
2. What does the initial priority of cattle before children reveal about spiritual blind spots?
3. How should believers balance practical provision with covenant responsibilities to God's larger purposes?

## Interlinear Text

---

וַיָּשׁוּ וְ	אֵלָיו	וַיֹּאמֶר וְ	גִּדְרֵת	צֵאן	נִבְנֶה ה
And they came near	H413	unto him and said	sheepfolds	H6629	We will build
H5066		H559	H1448		H1129
לְמִקְלָנוּ	כִּי ה	וְעָרִים	לְטַפָּנוּ:		
here for our cattle	H6311	and cities	for our little ones		
H4735		H5892	H2945		

---

From KJV Study • [kjvstudy.org](http://kjvstudy.org)