

Numbers 32:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

Analysis

The country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel (הַאֲצָרָה) —(אֲשֶׁר הָכָה הִהְיָה לִפְנֵי שָׁדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל) —they acknowledge God's military victory using the verb (nakah, 'to strike down/defeat'). Yet this acknowledgment becomes an excuse: since God conquered it, why not settle there? **Is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle** (אֲכָז מִקְנָה הוּא וְלֹעֲבָדִים מִקְנָה) —the double use of miqneh (livestock/cattle) reveals their primary concern. Perfect logic, wrong conclusion.

They correctly identify God's provision (the land) but incorrectly apply it, confusing divine victory with divine intention. This error recurs throughout Scripture: assuming God's blessing on Plan A indicates approval for our Plan B. The land was smitten 'before' Israel as a conquest route, not a settlement zone. Moses will expose this category mistake, showing how selfish pragmatism masquerades as faith.

Historical Context

Israel defeated Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan (Numbers 21) while traveling the 'King's Highway' north through Transjordan. This territory was never part of God's Abrahamic land promise, which focused on Canaan west of Jordan (Genesis 15:18-21).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can you distinguish between God's providential provision and His ultimate purposes for your life?
2. When have you used God's blessing as justification for settling short of His best?
3. What's the difference between pragmatic wisdom and spiritual presumption in decision-making?

Interlinear Text

עד תְּלִפְנֵי כָּבֵד תְּבָרֵךְ יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר אָשֶׁר רָא	לִפְנֵי תְּבָרֵךְ יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר אָשֶׁר רָא
Even the country	smote which the LORD
H776	H834
	before the congregation
	H5712

מִלְחָמָה לְעָבֵד יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר רָא מִלְחָמָה:	לְעָבֵד יְהֹוָה אֲשֶׁר רָא מִלְחָמָה:
of Israel	Even the country
H3478	H776
for cattle	and thy servants
H4735	H5650
for cattle	H4735

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 21:34 (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

Numbers 21:24 (References Israel): And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

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