

great cooperative undertaking there is always a danger that those who reach their objectives first will desert the others. Moses rightly took measures to prevent this. He assured the petitioners that if they turned away from following God they would bring great misery on themselves and on all the people of Israel (14-15). Immediately the Reubenites and Gadites replied that they would be glad to go over and take part in conquering the rest of the land, leaving their families in the walled cities of Transjordan (16-19). Moses agreed to this (20-24) but made absolutely sure that the promise would be well remembered. He insisted that it be solemnly repeated twice (25-27; 31-32) and declared very serious penalties if it should be broken (23,30). What startling evidence of the weakness and frailty of human promises, that Moses should insist on ~~that~~ triple repetition! Satan is ever active, to tempt people for their own advantage to forget their promises. Even in dealing with God's people, it is desirable that important agreements be made explicit and clear.

Moses gave the land of Gilead to the petitioners (22,28-29,33). Up to this point only Reuben and Gad were mentioned, but now half the tribe of Manasseh is also mentioned and verses 39-42 describe the territory which it received. Whether Manasseh had made a request, along with Gad and Reuben, but had not been mentioned in the record until this point, since only part of a tribe was involved, is not clear. Gad and Reuben received territory already conquered (34-38). Verses 39 and 41 describe a further conquest by members of the tribe of Manasseh. After the conquest of Canaan, Joshua thanked the men of the two and a half tribes for having kept their promise to Moses, and sent them home with his blessing (Jos.xxii.1-6), but almost immediately their isolation led to misunderstanding and near war between them and the other Israelites (Jos.xxii.1-34).