

1 Kings 18:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

Analysis

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

This verse contributes to the broader narrative of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, within the book's focus on prophetic ministry of Elijah confronting Baalism. The prophetic office represents God's faithful witness even in apostasy, calling His people back to covenant faithfulness.

The Hebrew text reveals nuances important for understanding this passage's contribution to 1 Kings' theological message about kingship, covenant, and faithfulness to Yahweh. This verse demonstrates the consequences when God's people—especially their leaders—either follow or forsake the covenant established at Sinai.

Historical Context

First Kings was written during or after the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE), reflecting on the monarchy period (10th-9th centuries BCE) to explain why the kingdoms fell. Elijah's ministry (c. 860-850 BCE) occurred during Ahab's reign, a time of intense spiritual crisis in Israel.

Ancient Near Eastern kingship ideology viewed kings as divine representatives responsible for maintaining cosmic order through right worship. Archaeological discoveries from sites like Megiddo, Hazor, and Samaria confirm the historical reliability of 1 Kings' descriptions of building projects and administrative structures.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage illustrate the importance of complete obedience to God's word without compromise?
2. What does Elijah's ministry reveal about God's character and His commitment to His covenant people?
3. How does this verse point toward or prepare for the coming of Christ and His eternal kingdom?

Interlinear Text

וָקַח	אֶלֶיָּהוּ	שְׁתֵּי יָמִים	עֲשָׂרָה	אֲבָנֵי יָם	כַּמֶּסֶפַּר
took	And Elijah	twelve	H6240	stones	according to the number
H3947	H452	H8147		H68	H4557
שְׁבִטֵי י	בְּנֵי	יַעֲקֹב ב	אֲשֶׁר	הָיָה	דְּבַר
of the tribes	of the sons	of Jacob	H834	H1961	unto whom the word
H7626	H1121	H3290			H1697
יְהוָה ה	אֵלָיו	לָאָמַר ר	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל	יְהוָה ה	שָׁמָּה:
of the LORD	H413	came saying	Israel	H1961	shall be thy ~
H3068		H559	H3478		H8034

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 32:28 (References Israel): And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Genesis 35:10 (References Israel): And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

2 Kings 17:34 (Word): Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

Joshua 4:20 (Parallel theme): And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.