

Deuteronomy 33:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Analysis

He provided the first part for himself—Gad chose the Trans-Jordan territory 'first' (reshit), not from selfishness but strategic wisdom. The phrase chelqat mechoket (portion of the lawgiver) is debated: either Gad's territory included Moses's burial place (Deuteronomy 34:6), or it acknowledges their obedience to Mosaic command by fighting west of Jordan before settling east.

He came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD—Despite having their inheritance secured, Gadite warriors led (roshe ha'am, heads of the people) Israel's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 4:12-13). Tzidkat YHWH (justice/righteousness of the LORD) means they fulfilled covenant obligations, executing divine judgment on Canaanite wickedness. Their faithfulness despite geographical separation demonstrates that covenant membership demands mutual sacrifice, not selfish isolationism.

Historical Context

Numbers 32 records Gad and Reuben's request for Trans-Jordan land, which Moses granted conditionally: they must cross Jordan armed and fight until Canaan was subdued. This blessing confirms they honored that vow. The 'portion of the lawgiver' interpretation linking to Moses's tomb is ancient (Targums, Rashi) but

uncertain—Moses's burial site remains deliberately hidden (Deuteronomy 34:6). More likely it honors their covenantal obedience to Moses's law.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Gad's example challenge the tension between pursuing personal blessing and serving the broader community of faith?
2. In what ways are you called to 'execute the justice of the LORD' even when your own needs are already met?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּרְא	רֵאשִׁית	ל	כִּי	שָׁם
And he provided	the first part	H0	H3588	H8033
H7200	H7225			
תָּ	מִחֹקֶק	סָפַן	וַיָּבֵא	
for himself because there in a portion	of the lawgiver	was he seated	and he came	
H2513	H2710	H5603	H857	
בְּרָאשֵׁי	עַם	צִדְקַת	יְהוָה	עָשָׂה
with the heads	of the people	the justice	of the LORD	he executed
H7218	H5971	H6666	H3068	H6213
וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו	עִם	יִשְׂרָאֵל:		
and his judgments	H5973	with Israel		
H4941		H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 1:14 (Parallel theme): Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;

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