

Joshua 22:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

Analysis

And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

Joshua's final instruction concerns the division of war spoils. The repeated emphasis "much riches...very much cattle...very much raiment" (rav and harbeh me'od, רַב and הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד) stresses abundance—God blessed their obedience materially. The specific mention of metals—silver, gold, brass (nechoshet, נְחֹשֶׁת, likely bronze), and iron—indicates valuable war plunder from conquered cities. Iron was particularly precious in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age transition, making these spoils economically significant.

The command "divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren" (chalequ shalal oyveichem im acheichem, חֲלֵקוּ שָׁלַל אוֹיְבֵיכֶם עִם אֶחָיֶכֶם) reveals a crucial principle: those who fought must share with those who stayed behind. This mirrors David's later law in 1 Samuel 30:24: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." The Transjordan men must share spoils with their brothers who remained east—both those who guarded families and those who could not fight.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare primarily aimed at plunder—livestock, precious metals, cloth, weapons, and sometimes captives. The defeated Canaanite city-states possessed wealth accumulated through strategic location on trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Deuteronomy 20:14 permitted Israel to take spoils from distant cities, though devoted cities like Jericho required total destruction of goods (Joshua 6:17-19). The Transjordan warriors accumulated seven years of plunder—an enormous fortune. The requirement to share with non-combatants prevented resentment between those who fought and those who stayed, maintained economic equity, and acknowledged that guarding families and territory was also essential service. This principle of equitable distribution prevented the emergence of a wealthy warrior class and maintained tribal cohesion.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you handle material blessing that comes through your service—with generosity toward others who supported you, or with possessive individualism?
2. What does equitable sharing of 'spoils' look like in modern contexts—recognizing and compensating support workers, administrative staff, or those in less visible roles?
3. How does this command challenge prosperity theology that treats blessing as individual reward rather than corporate provision to be shared?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵל	שׁ וְבוֹ	רַב	בְּנֶכֶס יָם	וְאֵל	רַב	וְאֵל	וְאֵל
And he spake	Return	much	riches	And he spake	much	And he spake	And he spake
H559	H7725	H7227	H5233	H559	H7227	H559	H559
וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל
unto your tents	and with gold	with silver	and with very	much	cattle	and with iron	and with brass
H168	H2091	H3701	H3966	H7227	H4735	H1270	H5178
וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל
and with brass	and with very	much	raiment	and with iron	and with brass	and with iron	and with brass
H5178	H3966	H7235	H8008	H1270	H5178	H1270	H5178
וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל	וְאֵל
the spoil	with your brethren	of your enemies	the spoil	the spoil	the spoil	the spoil	the spoil
H7998	H251	H341	H5973	H7998	H7998	H7998	H7998

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 31:27 (Parallel theme): And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation:

Proverbs 3:16 (Parallel theme): Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

2 Chronicles 32:27 (Parallel theme): And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;

1 Samuel 30:24 (Parallel theme): For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.