

Joshua 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.

Analysis

God prescribes the process for identifying the guilty party: 'ye shall be brought according to your tribes...families...households...man by man.' This methodical narrowing from tribe to individual demonstrates God's precision—nothing is hidden from Him (Hebrews 4:13). The phrase 'he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire' specifies the penalty—capital punishment by fire, the most severe form reflecting the gravity of the offense. Fire symbolizes God's holiness consuming sin utterly. The expanded punishment—'he, and all that he hath'—extends to possessions and possibly family, illustrating sin's ripple effects. The rationale: 'he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and...wrought folly in Israel.' Covenant violation isn't merely breaking rules but betraying relationship with God. 'Folly' (nebalah, נְבָלָה) means senseless wickedness, moral outrage—not simple mistake but deliberate defiance. This process combines divine revelation (God identifies) and human responsibility (Israel executes judgment), modeling how God's people address sin.

Historical Context

The tribal system provided Israel's organizational structure. Moving from tribe to clan to household to individual showed the integration of corporate and individual identity—you were part of concentric circles of relationship and responsibility. The use of lots (implied in 'taken') was standard Israelite practice for discerning God's will (Proverbs 16:33). This wasn't magic but reliance on God's sovereign control over apparently random processes. Archaeological evidence from ancient Israel confirms the household structure—extended families living in compounds. Achan's sin affected his entire household because they either knew and concealed it or benefited from the stolen items. Capital punishment for covenant violation reinforces that covenant relationship with God was Israel's foundational reality—violating it threatened community survival. The specification 'burnt with fire' distinguished this from typical capital punishment (stoning), emphasizing total consumption and purification.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does the progression from tribe to individual teach about balancing corporate and personal responsibility?
2. How should churches today identify and address sin while maintaining both grace and accountability?
3. What makes covenant violation 'folly' rather than mere rule-breaking?

Interlinear Text

בְּבֹרֶךְ יְהֹוָה בְּשָׁבֵט הַשְׁבֵט יְהֹוָה בְּשָׁבֵט
shall come In the morning according to your tribes H1961 according to your tribes
H7126 H1242 H7626 H7626

וְמִשְׁפָּט הַמִּשְׁפָּט יְהֹוָה בְּשָׁבֵט אֲשֶׁר
shall take which the LORD shall come according to the families H4940
H834 H3920 H3068 H7126 H4940

וְמִשְׁפָּט הַמִּשְׁפָּט יְהֹוָה בְּשָׁבֵט אֲשֶׁר
according to the families shall take which the LORD shall come H7126
H4940 H834 H3920 H3068 H7126

יְהֹוָה בְּשָׁבֵט אֲשֶׁר וְבָתְּה
and the household and the household H834 shall take which the LORD
H1004 H1004 H3920 H3068

בְּגַבְּרִים יְהֹוָה בְּ
shall come by man
H7126 H1397

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:33 (References Lord): The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Jonah 1:7 (Parallel theme): And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.