

Joshua 7:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

Analysis

The messengers took the items from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all Israel, laying them before the LORD. The recovery process involves community—messengers retrieve, leaders receive, all Israel witnesses, items are presented before God. The phrase 'laid them out before the LORD' indicates presenting the evidence in God's presence, likely before the ark. This action acknowledges that the sin was primarily against God—stolen items are returned to His presence for judgment. The comprehensive witnessing ('all the children of Israel') ensures corporate knowledge and accountability. No one could later claim ignorance or dispute the facts. The public presentation also served as object lesson—these are the forbidden items that cost Israel victory, thirty-six lives, and now will cost Achan and his household everything. The treasures that seemed desirable are revealed as deadly. This illustrates sin's deceitfulness—what appears valuable brings death (James 1:15; Romans 6:23).

Historical Context

The phrase 'before the LORD' indicates the ark's presence—God's earthly throne. Presenting evidence before the ark acknowledged divine jurisdiction over the case. Ancient Near Eastern legal proceedings often occurred at sacred sites, invoking divine witness to judicial proceedings. The public nature of the presentation fulfilled multiple purposes: validated the evidence, created community consensus for the coming judgment, and educated all Israel about covenant violation's

seriousness. The visual impact would have been powerful—the luxurious Babylonian garment, the pile of silver, the gold bar, all laid out before God and community. These were the forbidden things that had broken fellowship with God and caused military defeat. The presentation concluded the investigation phase; judgment would follow. Archaeological discoveries show that ancient communities practiced public justice to maintain social cohesion and deter future violations. The communal aspect reinforced that Achan's private sin had corporate consequences.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does presenting evidence 'before the LORD' teach about God's role in justice?
2. How does the public exposure of sin serve both justice and community education?
3. What treasures in your life, if laid before the LORD, would be revealed as forbidden or idolatrous?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּקְרֹב מִתְּוֹךְ אֶל כָּל וְאֶל יְהוָה
And they took them out of the midst of the tent and brought
H3947 H8432 H168 H935 H413

וְאֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל כָּל בְּנֵי יִהוּשָׁעַ
them unto Joshua and unto all the children of Israel
H3091 H413 H3605 H1121 H3478

וְאֶל בְּרִאֵל וְאֶל יְהוָה בְּפָנָיו
and laid them out before the LORD
H3332 H6440 H3068

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