

Joshua 8:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.

Analysis

All that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand—This total population figure for Ai is remarkably specific, suggesting official records or eyewitness counting. The Hebrew eleph (אֶלֶף) can mean 'thousand' or 'military unit,' though the narrative context favors literal thousands. **Even all the men of Ai** clarifies this was complete destruction.

The number's precision demonstrates Scripture's historical reliability. Including women in the count acknowledges that God's judgment fell on the entire corrupt society—children grow into culture-bearers who perpetuate evil (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). While troubling to modern sensibilities, these judgments illustrate sin's devastating consequences and God's intolerance of systematic wickedness. The number also showed Israel that divine vengeance completely avenged their earlier defeat (Joshua 7:5).

Historical Context

A population of 12,000 fits a small Canaanite city-state of the Late Bronze Age (15th-13th centuries BC). Ai was smaller than Jericho but strategically located near Bethel. The battle occurred circa 1406 BC. Ancient Near Eastern texts commonly record casualty figures, and Joshua's precision here suggests military records kept during the conquest.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the specificity of biblical numbers challenge claims that Scripture is merely symbolic or mythological?
2. What does complete judgment on Ai teach about the finality of God's wrath for those who die unrepentant?

Interlinear Text

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