

Numbers 3:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:)

Analysis

The specification 'after the shekel of the sanctuary' establishes a divine standard for measurement, not human manipulation. The sanctuary shekel was an exact, God-ordained weight preventing fraud. This principle extends to all God's standards—His law is the unchanging measure of righteousness, not situational ethics (Malachi 3:6). The Hebrew shekel ha-kodesh (holy shekel) was twenty gerahs, ensuring precision. God's justice requires accurate weights and measures (Leviticus 19:36), picturing His perfect righteousness as the standard for judgment.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern commerce suffered from dishonest weights. Merchants might carry two sets—heavy weights for buying, light for selling. The sanctuary shekel established an incorruptible standard, kept at the tabernacle. Archaeological discoveries have uncovered ancient shekel weights varying considerably, confirming the need for standardization.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's unchanging standard challenge relativistic ethics?
2. What 'false weights' does modern culture use instead of biblical truth?
3. Why must God's law be the fixed standard for righteousness?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| תְּקַנֵּת | שְׁתִים | שְׁתִים | בְּשֶׁלֶת | לְתַלְגָּל |
| Thou shalt even take | five | five | after the shekel | apiece by the poll |
| H3947 | H2568 | H2568 | H8255 | H1538 |
| בְּשֶׁלֶת | בְּקַנֵּת | בְּקַנֵּת | בְּקַנֵּת | בְּקַנֵּת |
| after the shekel | of the sanctuary | Thou shalt even take | is twenty | gerahs |
| H8255 | H6944 | H3947 | H6242 | H1626 |
| בְּשֶׁלֶת | | | | |
| after the shekel | | | | |
| H8255 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 30:13 (Temple): This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.

Leviticus 27:6 (Parallel theme): And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver.

Leviticus 27:25 (Temple): And all thy estimations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall be the shekel.

Numbers 18:16 (Temple): And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

Ezekiel 45:12 (Parallel theme): And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

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