

Numbers 31:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

Analysis

They burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire—the Hebrew sarap (burnt) indicates complete destruction, while tirah (castles/encampments) suggests both permanent settlements and nomadic fortifications. This total destruction went beyond mere military victory to cultural obliteration, ensuring Midian could not regroup or continue their seductive influence over Israel.

The burning of cities parallels Israel's later conquest of Canaan, where God commanded destruction of idolatrous centers (Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3). Fire purified the land from idolatry's pollution—the same fires that would burn Canaanite high places now consumed Midianite worship centers. This foreshadows ultimate judgment when God will purify creation with fire (2 Peter 3:10-12), burning away all that corrupts His people.

Historical Context

Midianite settlements in this period combined permanent towns with mobile encampments, reflecting their semi-nomadic lifestyle. Archaeological evidence shows Bronze Age settlements in Transjordan matching this description. The burning prevented Midian from rebuilding quickly and removed places where Baal worship occurred. This military tactic—destroying enemy infrastructure—was common in ancient Near Eastern warfare, but Israel's theological motivation

(removing idolatry's sources) distinguished their campaigns from purely political conquest.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'strongholds' in your life—habits, environments, or thought patterns—need complete destruction rather than gradual reform?
2. How does God's command to destroy sin's infrastructure challenge modern tolerance of 'manageable' compromise?

Interlinear Text

כֹּל וְאֶת בָּם וְשִׁבְתָּם עַרְיוֹנִים
H853 H3605 all their cities wherein they dwelt H853 H3605

H5892 H4186

בְּאֵשׁ שְׁרֵפָה טִירָתָם
and all their goodly castles And they burnt with fire

H2918 H8313 H784

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