

Numbers 31:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

Analysis

They took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts—the Hebrew distinguishes shalal (inanimate spoil: goods, weapons, treasure) from malqowach (prey: living captives, livestock). This verse summarizes the totality of Israel's victory: complete material plunder and human/animal captives. Unlike typical ancient conquest where victors kept spoils by personal right, Israel operated under cherem (devoted thing) laws—God claimed first rights to all spoils (verse 28-30).

The enumeration of spoils establishes their accountability to God. Numbers 31:25-47 details precise distribution: portions for warriors, congregation, Levites, and Yahweh's tribute. This system taught Israel that military success came from God's power, not human might, and all belongs ultimately to Him (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). The principle continues: believers are stewards, not owners, of every blessing.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare typically allowed soldiers to keep personal plunder, creating incentive for military service. Israel's system differed radically: spoils were pooled, counted, and distributed by law, with portions dedicated to tabernacle service. This prevented greed-driven warfare and maintained focus on executing divine judgment rather than personal enrichment. The detailed accounting in verses 32-47 (675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, 32,000

virgin women) shows the campaign's massive scale and Israel's meticulous obedience to distribution laws.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Do you view your resources as personal property or as spoils of spiritual warfare to be stewarded under God's lordship?
2. How does Israel's communal distribution of blessings challenge modern individualistic ownership mindsets?

Interlinear Text

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|----------------------|--------|-------|----------------------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| וְיִקְרְבָּו | אַתָּה | כָּל | לְפָנֶיךָ | כָּל | וְאֶת | כָּל | וְכָל | וְכָל | בְּאֶת | בְּאֶת |
| And they took | H853 | H3605 | all the spoil | H853 | H3605 | and all the prey | H4455 | both of men | | H120 |

בְּבָהָמָה:

and of beasts

H929

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 20:14 (Parallel theme): But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

Joshua 8:2 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

