

Numbers 31:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation:

Analysis

Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast—The Hebrew malqowach (prey/booty) included 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 captive virgins (31:32-35). Moses, Eleazar, and tribal leaders must census everything before distribution.

This meticulous accounting reveals God's concern for justice in material affairs. The spoils represented enormous wealth, yet required transparent inventory by religious and civil authorities together. No soldier could hide plunder; no leader could embezzle. The principle: when God grants increase, His people must handle it with integrity and communal awareness, not private greed.

Historical Context

The census of plunder parallels Numbers' broader census theme (chs. 1-4, 26). Eleazar the priest (Aaron's son) now shares leadership with Moses, preparing for Joshua's succession. The 'chief fathers' were tribal representatives, ensuring fair witness across all Israel.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why does God require such detailed accounting rather than trusting individuals' honesty?
2. How might transparent financial accountability strengthen church or ministry integrity today?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת שָׁאֵל
Take and the chief
H853 H7218 H4455 H7628 H120

וְבָבְחַת הָעֵדָה
and of beast thou and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers
H929 H859 H499 H3548 H7218 H1

בְּעִדָּה:
of the congregation
H5712