

Numbers 31:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation:

Analysis

And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them...and between all the congregation—The Hebrew chatsah (divide) creates 50-50 split between combatants (12,000 men, 31:5) and non-combatants (approximately 600,000+ total population). Soldiers risked death; community supported them with prayer, logistics, families.

This radical redistribution prevents military elitism. Soldiers don't become a privileged warrior class; Israel remains a covenant community where all share God's blessings. Paul echoes this: 'He that goeth to battle, and he that tarrieth by the baggage—they shall share alike' (1 Sam 30:24), applied to ministry support (1 Cor 9:7-14). Service takes different forms; reward is communal.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern custom gave warriors full rights to plunder. David later reinforced this Mosaic principle after defeating Amalekites (1 Samuel 30:21-25), establishing it as 'statute and ordinance' in Israel. This countered the warrior-aristocracy common in surrounding nations.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this 50-50 division challenge societies that excessively reward certain professions over others?
2. What would equitable 'spoils sharing' look like in churches where some serve publicly and others behind the scenes?

Interlinear Text

וְחָצַד יִתְּ	אֶת	הַמֶּלֶק וְחַ	בֵּי יִן	תִּפְּשׁ י	הַמֶּלֶחֶם הַ
And divide	H853	the prey	H996	between them that took	the war
H2673		H4455		H8610	H4421
הַיֵּצֵא יִם		לְצָבָא	וְיִן	כָּל	הָעֵדָה:
upon them who went out		to battle	H996	H3605	and between all the congregation
H3318		H6635			H5712

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 22:8 (Parallel theme): And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.