

Numbers 31:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD.

Analysis

The military officers brought gold ornaments as 'atonement for our souls before the LORD,' recognizing that even righteous war (God-commanded) involved bloodshed requiring purification. The Hebrew 'kaphar' (atonement) means to cover or make reconciliation. Remarkably, not one Israelite soldier died (v.49) - a miraculous preservation pointing to God's protective power. Yet they still sought atonement, understanding that taking human life, even in divine judgment, required spiritual cleansing. This demonstrates that God's people must maintain tender consciences even when executing His just commands. The offering wasn't payment for sin but grateful acknowledgment of God's mercy and their need for cleansing.

Historical Context

This voluntary offering followed the war against Midian where Israel executed divine judgment. The gold ornaments - likely plundered from Midianite idols - were consecrated to God's service, transforming spoils of paganism into holy offerings. The amount was substantial (16,750 shekels of gold), showing both the battle's magnitude and Israel's genuine gratitude. The priests kept half as memorial before the Lord in the tabernacle, creating lasting remembrance of God's deliverance and their consecration.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you maintain a tender conscience even in activities that seem spiritually neutral or justified?
2. How can you consecrate to God the 'spoils' of your victories - turning success into opportunities for worship rather than pride?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| וְנִקְרָב | אֶת | קָרְבַּן | יְהוָה: | אִישׁ | | |
| We have therefore brought | H853 | an oblation | for the LORD | what every man | | |
| H7126 | | H7133 | H3068 | H376 | | |
| אֵשׁ ר | מָצָא | כָּלִי | זָהָב | הָאֶצְעָד | וְצַמֵּי יָד | טַבַּעֲתֵי |
| H834 | hath gotten | of jewels | of gold | chains | and bracelets | rings |
| | H4672 | H3627 | H2091 | H685 | H6781 | H2885 |
| עֲגֵל יָל | וְכֹתָבִים ז | לְכַפֵּר ר | עַל | נַפְשֵׁתֵינוּ | לִפְנֵי י | |
| earrings | and tablets | to make an atonement | H5921 | for our souls | before | |
| H5694 | H3558 | H3722 | | H5315 | H6440 | |
| יְהוָה: | | | | | | |
| for the LORD | | | | | | |
| H3068 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 30:12 (References Lord): When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.

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