

# Numbers 31:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.

## Analysis

**The children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones**—the Hebrew shabah (took captive) describes taking prisoners of war. Initially, the soldiers spared the women and children contrary to God's intent, prompting Moses' rebuke in verse 15. The taking of **all the spoil of all their cattle...flocks...and goods** (Hebrew shalal for spoil, malqowach for prey) was standard ancient warfare practice, but Israel's campaigns differed—spoils belonged to Yahweh first, then were distributed by divine law.

This verse sets up the theological problem addressed in verses 15-18: the women of Midian had been instruments of Israel's seduction to Baal-Peor (25:1-18), making their preservation dangerous. The soldiers' initial mercy violated God's purpose to remove the source of Israel's spiritual corruption, demonstrating that human compassion without divine wisdom can perpetuate sin's influence.

## Historical Context

This campaign against Midian (c. 1406 BC) executed divine judgment for the Baal-Peor incident where Midianite women, following Balaam's counsel, seduced Israelite men into idolatry and sexual immorality, resulting in a plague killing 24,000. The Midianites were descended from Abraham through Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4), making this judgment against distant relatives particularly poignant. The

battle occurred on the plains of Moab just before Israel's entry into Canaan, serving as Moses' final military act.

## Related Passages

## **Romans 2:1 – Judging others**

## **Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds**

## Study Questions

1. How can well-intentioned mercy toward sin's sources undermine God's purposes for holiness in your life?
2. What 'captives' are you taking— influences or relationships—that seem harmless but carry spiritual danger?

## Interlinear Text

וְשָׁבָה	בְּנֵי	אֶת	יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵי	וְשָׁבָה	מִדְיָן	אֶת
<b>captives</b>	<b>And the children</b>	<b>of Israel</b>	H853	<b>took all the women</b>	<b>of Midian</b>		H853
H7617	H1121	H3478		H802		H4080	

מִקְנָה מִכְלָה מִכְלָה מִכְלָה מִכְלָה מִכְלָה  
and their little ones H853 H3605 of all their cattle H853 H3605 and all their flocks H2945 H929 H4735

בְּזִיזָה: וְאַתָּה כָּל חִיל מִ and all their goods and took the spoil H3605 H853 H2428 H962

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