

Numbers 32:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD.

Analysis

And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD—"Subdued" (kavash, כָּבַשׁ) means thoroughly conquered and brought under control. The repeated phrase "before the LORD" (three times in one verse) emphasizes God as witness, judge, and sovereign. Every element—conquest, returning home, land possession—occurs under divine scrutiny.

"Guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel" establishes dual accountability: vertical (to God) and horizontal (to the covenant community). Being guiltless (naqiy, נָקִי, innocent, free from obligation) requires fulfilling all covenant commitments. Only then does their possession become legitimate "before the LORD"—divine approval rests on covenant faithfulness. This verse demonstrates that legitimate blessing depends on faithful obedience. Premature return would make them guilty of covenant-breaking, forfeiting God's blessing and incurring community condemnation.

Historical Context

Joshua 22:1-9 records the fulfillment: after conquest, Joshua commended Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh for keeping their pledge, declared them guiltless, and dismissed them to Transjordan with blessing. However, controversy immediately arose over an altar they built (Joshua 22:10-34), demonstrating how geographical separation could generate misunderstanding. Later, these tribes faced assimilation pressures. First Chronicles 5:25-26 records that they "transgressed against the God of their fathers" and were carried captive by Assyria before the western tribes.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the requirement to be "guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel" balance divine and human accountability?
2. What does the triple repetition of "before the LORD" teach about conducting all life under God's gaze?
3. In what ways can legitimate possession of blessing depend on faithful completion of covenant obligations?

Interlinear Text

וְנִכְבְּשָׁה	וְהָאֲרֶץ	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה:	וְאַחֲרָי	תָּשׁוּ בָּהֶם
be subdued	And the land	before	before the LORD	then afterward	ye shall return
H3533	H776	H6440	H3068	H310	H7725
וְהָיִיתָ	נָקִי	יְהוָה:	וּמִשְׁכָּנִי	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְהָיִיתָ
H1961	and be guiltless	before the LORD	and before Israel	H1961	
	H5355	H3068	H3478		
וְהָאֲרֶץ	הַזֹּאת	לְכֶם	לְאֻמָּה	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה:
And the land	H2063	H0	shall be your possession	before	before the LORD
H776			H272	H6440	H3068

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 22:4 (References Lord): And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.

Joshua 22:9 (References Lord): And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Deuteronomy 3:20 (References Lord): Until the LORD have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the LORD your God hath given them beyond Jordan: and then shall ye return every man unto his possession, which I have given you.

Joshua 1:15 (References Lord): Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

Joshua 13:8 (References Lord): With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them;

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