

Numbers 31

Verses 1 - 12

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Take vengeance on the Midianites for the sons of Israel; afterward you will be gathered to your people.” ³ So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, so that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord’s vengeance on Midian. ⁴ You shall send a thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel to the war.” ⁵ So there were selected from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. ⁶ And Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy implements and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. ⁷ So they made war against Midian, just as the Lord had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. ⁸ They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest* of those killed: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. ⁹ And the sons of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones; and they plundered all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their property. ¹⁰ Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their encampments. ¹¹ And they took all the plunder and all the spoils, both of people and of livestock. ¹² They brought the captives and the spoils and the plunder to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the sons of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab which are by the Jordan, *opposite* Jericho.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Take vengeance on the Midianites for the sons of Israel; afterward you will be gathered to your people

This chapter records the war against Midian

God wanted Israel to go to war against Midian because they had tricked God's people into idolatry and immorality

See Numbers 25:17-18

As a result, 24,000 Israelites died in a plague.

Being tricked by evil men is not an excuse for sinful behavior but those who create an environment and opportunity for others to sin must suffer the consequences.

This is what Satan did to Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden.

You shall send a thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel to the war

Some commentators believe the word for 1000 here should be translated division. So it should say a division from each tribe.

In either case the size of the army is not that important since God was with them. If the number of men was really important we probably would have been informed of the size of the opposing force.

And Moses sent them, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy implements and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand

Phinehas came into prominence by killing Zimri and Cozbi, the Israelite man and Midianite woman who died at the end of a spear

The silver trumpets were mentioned in Numbers 10:1 - 10

See Pics 3105



So they made war against Midian, just as the Lord had commanded Moses

This is not the people of Midian by the Gulf of Aquabah but rather several tribes of Midianites that were living in or near the plains of Moab.

⁷ They killed every male

This did not include the young boys (see verse 17)

⁹ They killed the kings of Midian

They also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword

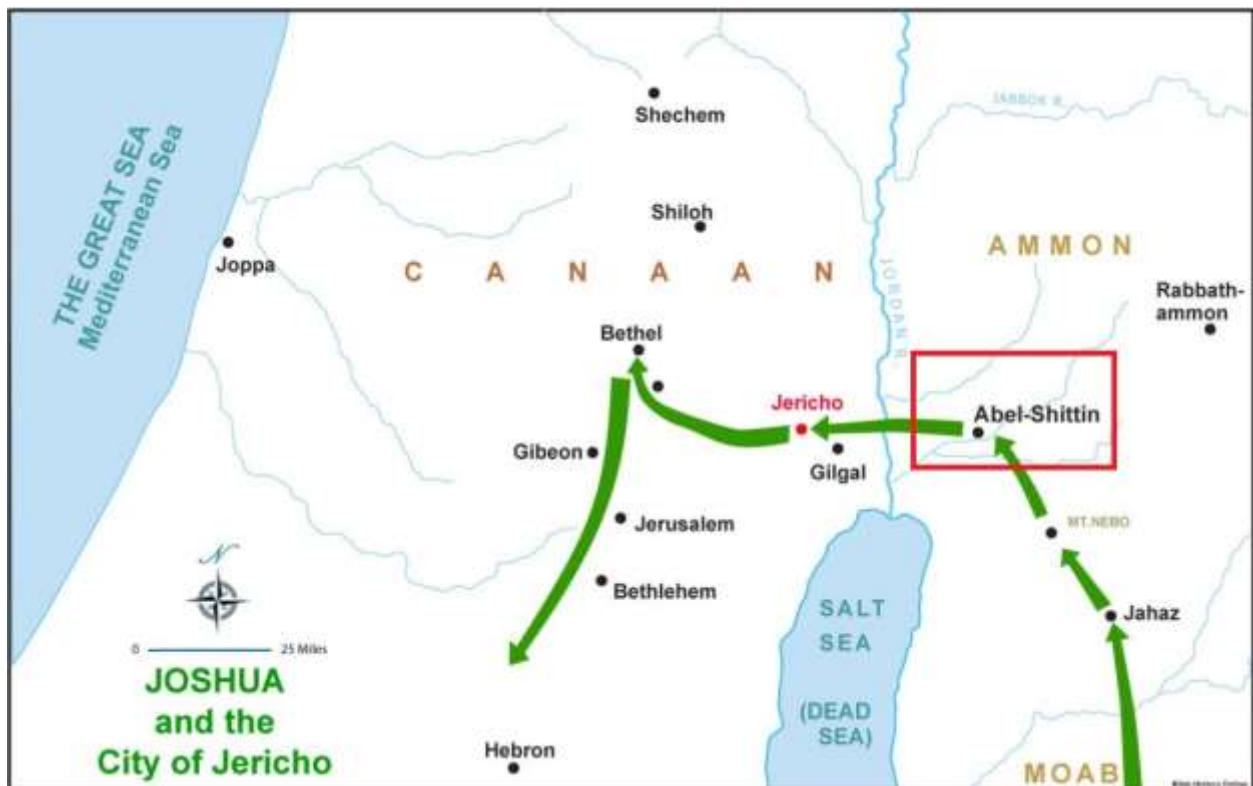
A prophet of God has been given much and much is expected in return

⁹ And the sons of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones

Moses will soon reveal the motives of the men for sparing the women.

They brought the captives and the spoils and the plunder to Moses, to the camp at the plains of Moab which are by the Jordan, *opposite* Jericho.

See Map 3115



This had been their camp since Chapter 22. See verse 1

Then the sons of Israel journeyed on, and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.

Verses 13 – 20

¹³ And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴ But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. ¹⁵ And Moses said to them, “Have you spared all the women? ¹⁶ Behold, they caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to be unfaithful to the Lord in the matter of Peor, so that the plague took place among the congregation of the Lord! ¹⁷ Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. ¹⁸ However, all the girls who have not known a man intimately, keep alive for yourselves. ¹⁹ And as for you, camp outside the camp for seven days; whoever has killed a person and whoever has touched *anyone* killed, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰ And you shall purify for yourselves every garment, every article of leather, every work of goats’ *hair*, and every article of wood.”

But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, “Have you spared all the women? Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.

Moses ordered any woman that was not a virgin to be killed.

The married women were more mature and set in their religious beliefs and would teach others about the gods they worshipped.

See Deuteronomy 20:17 – 18

¹⁷ Instead, you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ so that they will not teach you to do all the same detestable practices of theirs which they have done for their gods, by which you would sin against the Lord your God.

The younger girls would be more likely to accept the Jewish way of life

Moses also ordered all the young boys to be killed.

Young boys who have seen their parents killed by these Jewish foreigners could grow up to be angry young men with a desire to lead a rebellion.

¹⁹ And as for you, camp outside the camp for seven days; whoever has killed a person and whoever has touched *anyone* killed, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰ And you shall purify for yourselves every garment, every article of leather, every work of goats' *hair*, and every article of wood."

The ceremony of purification was given in Numbers 19

Verses 21 – 24

²¹ Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to battle, "This is the statute of the Law which the Lord has commanded Moses: ²² only the gold and the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, ²³ everything that can withstand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it will be clean, only it shall be purified with water for impurity. But whatever cannot withstand the fire you shall pass through the water. ²⁴ And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and you will be clean; and afterward you may enter the camp."

Everything that can withstand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it will be clean

This rule was not mentioned in Numbers 19

6 metals are mentioned here

Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead

The ancient world was not as limited as some have made it out to be

But whatever cannot withstand the fire you shall pass through the water

Water is the most common solvent known to man

It is also the safest cleaning agent known to man

Verses 25 – 31

²⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁶ “You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers’ *households* of the congregation take a count of the spoils that were captured, both of people and of livestock; ²⁷ and divide the spoils between the warriors who went to battle and all the congregation. ²⁸ Also, collect a tribute tax for the Lord from the men of war who went to battle, one in five hundred of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the sheep; ²⁹ take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the Lord. ³⁰ And from the sons of Israel’s half, you shall take one drawn from every fifty of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the sheep, from all the animals; and give them to the Levites who perform the duty of the tabernacle of the Lord.”
³¹ Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Take a count of the spoils that were captured, both of people and of livestock; and divide the spoils between the warriors who went to battle and all the congregation

Israel had an army of 600,000 but only a small part of this number was sent to battle the Midianites.

But everyone shared in the spoils of war. All of the army and all of the civilians profited from the war.

Collect a tribute tax for the Lord from the men of war who went to battle

1 in 500 of the persons, cattle, donkeys, and sheep were given to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the Lord.

That is a **.2%** contribution to the Lord

And from the sons of Israel

Take 1 in 50 of the persons, cattle, donkeys, and sheep and give them to the Levites who perform the duty of the tabernacle of the Lord.

This was a **2%** contribution to the Lord

It seems God looked at this war profit in a different way than the tithe of income.

Verses 32 - 41

³² Now the spoils that remained from the plunder which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep, ³³ seventy-two thousand cattle, ³⁴ sixty-one thousand donkeys, ³⁵ and of *captive* people, of the women who had not known a man intimately, in all were thirty-two thousand people. ³⁶ The half, the share of those who went to war, was *as follows*: the number of sheep was 337,500, ³⁷ the Lord's tribute tax of the sheep was 675; ³⁸ the cattle were thirty-six thousand, from which the Lord's tribute tax was seventy-two; ³⁹ the donkeys were 30,500, from which the Lord's tribute tax was sixty-one; ⁴⁰ and the *captive* people were sixteen thousand, from whom the Lord's tribute tax was thirty-two persons. ⁴¹ And Moses gave the tribute tax, *which was* the Lord's offering, to Eleazar the priest, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Now the spoils that remained from the plunder

We don't know how long this battle lasted but the army used some of the animals for food during that time. What remained of the animals was: 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, and 61,000 donkeys.

Knowing that 32,000 virgins were taken we can approximate the size of the Midianite Community at about 200,000.

This means the Jewish community outnumbered them by a 12 to 1 margin.

The size of the Midianite army would have been about 50,000.

The half, the share of those who went to war, was *as follows*

The men who fought got half of the profit.

This was 200 times more than those who did not go to war.

⁴¹ And Moses gave the tribute tax, *which was* the Lord's offering, to Eleazar the priest, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

The men who went to war received a lion's share of the profit and paid a much smaller tax as an offering to the Lord than those who did not fight.

Verses 42 – 47

⁴² As for the sons of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war— ⁴³ now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep, ⁴⁴ thirty-six thousand cattle, ⁴⁵ 30,500 donkeys, ⁴⁶ and the *captive* people were sixteen thousand— ⁴⁷ from the sons of Israel's half Moses took one drawn from every fifty, both of people and of animals, and gave them to the Levites, who performed the duty of the tabernacle of the Lord, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Now the congregation's half was

All of the Israelite community that did not go to war got the other half of the profit.

2% of their share went to the Lord.

So their share was much smaller than those who fought and they paid a higher tax to the Lord.

This seems fair since the men who fought risked life and limb.

Verses 48 - 54

⁴⁸ Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses, ⁴⁹ and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a census of the men of war who are under our authority, and no man of us is missing. ⁵⁰ So we have brought as an offering to the Lord what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord." ⁵¹ Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of crafted articles. ⁵² All the gold of the offering which they offered up to the Lord, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels. ⁵³ The men of war had taken plunder, every man for himself. ⁵⁴ So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the Lord.

Your servants have taken a census of the men of war who are under our authority, and no man of us is missing.

The officers rightly saw this as a miracle so they brought an offering to the Lord

So we have brought as an offering to the Lord what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord.”

Interesting how people have accumulated and worn items of value throughout history.

The Midianite community was not an exception to this rule.

All the gold of the offering which they offered up to the Lord, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels.

16,750 shekels = 421 lbs. of gold

That would be a value of 14 million in today's value

The men of war had taken plunder, every man for himself

The men who fought had taken many items of value before the spoils were distributed after the battle.

This is just the beginning of the riches they will acquire.