

Numbers Chapter 31 Continued

Verses 25-30

The booty was shared equally between those who fought in the battle and those who stayed behind (1 Sam. 30:24-25).

The soldiers were to dedicate one out of every five hundred captured persons and animals to the LORD.

Numbers 31:25 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

After the purification of the soldiers, their captives, and spoil.

"Saying":

As follows.

Numbers 31:26 "Take the sum of the prey that was taken, [both] of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation:"

The number of the females that were taken captive and spared.

And of the cattle, the sheep, oxen, and asses.

"Thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation":

Who were all men of authority and character.

And fit to be employed in such service, and of whose capacity and fidelity there could be no doubt.

It was Moses and Eleazar who would divide the prey.

They had sent the young men out to war, so they would be the ones to determine what was to be done with the prey.

The chief fathers of the congregation could be speaking of the 70 men Moses had chosen to assist him.

The prey is speaking of living things, not the goods.

Numbers 31:27 "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:"

Into two equal parts, both the number of the people and of the cattle, when taken.

"Between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle":

The soldiers; and by this it appears that they went voluntarily and cheerfully.

"And between all the congregation":

So that the part of them that went to battle, and of those that stayed in the camp, were alike.

And which in process of time became a statute and ordinance (1 Sam. 30:24).

Half of all the girls and the animals were to be given to the people who fought the battle.

The other half was divided among the congregation.

Numbers 31:28 "And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, [both] of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep:"

That is, out of the part of the prey which was divided to them.

"Of soul of five hundred, both "of the persons";

Or one woman of five hundred, as the Targum of Jonathan.

"And of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep":

That is, one out of five hundred, of each of them also.

This is a portion that goes to the LORD.

One of each five hundred of the souls they received shall be received in tribute to the LORD.

This included the girls, as well as the animals.

Beeves were animals of the ox kind, both male and female.

Numbers 31:29 "Take [it] of their half, and give [it] unto Eleazar the priest, [for] a heave offering of the LORD."

Of the half part of the prey divided to the soldiers.

"And give it unto Eleazar the priest, for a heave offering of the LORD":

By way of thanksgiving for the success and victory God had given them.

By means of which so much booty had fallen into their hands.

The portion given to the LORD is actually, for the use of the priest and his family.

The heave offering was offered to the LORD first, and then belonged to the priest.

Numbers 31:30 "And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

Which was abundantly more than what was taken out of the part of the soldiers.

And the reason of it is plain and easy to be discerned.

The soldiers had taken much pains, and gone through much fatigue, as well as had hazarded their lives.

And therefore less was to be taken from them.

And besides the tribute levied out of their half was to be given to the priests, who were not so numerous as the Levites.

Among whom the part out of the half of the congregation was to be distributed.

"Of the persons":

Of the women, as the Targums of Jonathan.

One of fifty out of them was to be given to the Levites to be their handmaids.

Or to be taken in marriage by them, or their sons, when fit for it.

"Of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts":

Of oxen, asses, sheep, and goats.

One out of fifty of each of these sorts were to be taken.

Aben Ezra observes, no mention is made of camels, being but few, and no part taken.

"And give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD":

For these being employed in the service of the tabernacle, came in for their share of the tribute levied unto the LORD.

Notice, the difference in the amount of those who did not go to war.

They were levied one out of fifty.

This is ten times the percentage, as those who went to war.

These went to the Levites, not to the priest and High Priest.

Numbers 31:31-47;

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses."

"And the booty, [being] the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep,"

"And threescore and twelve thousand beeves,"

"And threescore and one thousand asses,"

"And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him."

"And the half, [which was] the portion of them that went out to war, was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep:"

"And the LORD'S tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen."

"And the beeves [were] thirty and six thousand; of which the LORD'S tribute [was] threescore and twelve."

"And the asses [were] thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the LORD'S tribute [was] threescore and one."

"And the persons [were] sixteen thousand; of which the LORD'S tribute [was] thirty and two persons."

"And Moses gave the tribute, [which was] the LORD'S heave offering, unto Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses."

"And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the men that warred,"

"(Now the half [that pertained unto] the congregation was three hundred thousand and thirty thousand [and] seven thousand and five hundred sheep,"

"And thirty and six thousand beeves,"

"And thirty thousand asses and five hundred,"

"And sixteen thousand persons;)"

"Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, [both] of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses."

Took an account of the booty, divided it equally between the soldiers and the congregation of Israel.

And levied a part out of each as a tribute for the LORD.

Which was given to the priests and Levites.

This is just saying, that Moses and Eleazar did exactly as they were commanded of God.

The number of sheep was 675,000.

There were 72,000 ox-like animals.

There were 61,000 asses.

This seems like a lot of animals, but we must remember, that was the way these people made their living.

There were 32,000 virgin girls, that had not been killed.

The previous numbers were of the whole.

Now, we see just how many the soldiers received.

Their half was 337,500 sheep.

The tribute on this was 675 sheep.

This is the one out of five hundred mentioned above.

The beeves (ox-like animals), they received 36,000 of which the LORD received 72.

They received of the asses 30,500; of which the LORD received 61.

They received 16,000 virgins; of which the LORD received 32 persons.

All of these given to the LORD, were then in turn given to Eleazar.

We remember, that the High Priest received of the altar of the LORD for his wages.

This half went to all of those who stayed home.

Their half will be divided between a much larger group, but they did not go to war.

The congregation received 337,500 sheep, 36,000 beeves, 30,500 asses, and 16,000 persons.

The entire Levitical tribe received one out of each 50 of all of those belonging to the congregation.

This would have been 6,750 sheep, 720 beeves, 610 asses, and 320 virgins for all of the congregation combined.

Numbers 31:48 "And the officers which [were] over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses:"

Over the twelve thousand, of which the host or army consisted.

Namely, the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses.

Of their own accord, without being sent, or required to do what they did.

These officers were very well aware of the fact that they fought the battle, but the victory was because God was with them.

The leaders of the soldiers have now come to Moses.

Numbers 31:49 "And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which [are] under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us."

Gave the following relation to him, which is a very surprising one.

"Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge":

Since the war with Midian was over, they had mustered the several companies under their command.

Such as had thousands, and those that had hundreds.

"And there lacketh not one man of us":

Which is a most amazing and unheard of thing.

That in waging war with a whole nation, slaying all their males, sacking and burning so many cities, and plundering the inhabitants of their substance.

Taking and carrying off such a vast number of captives.

Yet not one should fall by the sword of the enemy.

Or by any disease or accident whatever.

But all to a man should return to the camp of Israel again.

This is not to be paralleled in any history.

It appears, that not even one Israelite soldier died in battle.

This has to be God's working.

This would not be a normal thing to happen in so great a battle.

Numbers 31:50 "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."

The gold earrings collected in Gideon's war against Midian were made into an ephod (Judges 8:24-27), that promoted idolatry.

But here they are used "to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD".

Some suggest that they had feelings of guilt, or that it was due to their participation in war, or that it was the census in verse 49 (compare Exodus 30:11-16), that prompted them to make atonement.

Perhaps it was due to their gratitude for God's signal blessing, and they wanted to stay in a right relationship with Him.

It appears from this, that the spoils went to the victors.

These precious things were brought to the LORD, in thanks for saving their lives in battle.

The atonement was like a covering for all sin.

Numbers 31:51 "And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, [even] all wrought jewels."

For it seems the several things before mentioned were all of gold.

"Even all wrought jewels":

Or "vessels of work" or wrought vessels.

Or instruments, "chains, bracelets", etc.

Which were all of gold, and curiously wrought.

Moses and Eleazar, acting on behalf of the LORD, received the booty from the leaders of the army.

Numbers 31:52 "And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the LORD, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels."

The whole amount, weight, and value of it put together.

"Of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds":

And perhaps of every common soldier, who might contribute his part.

Though it is not mentioned, but included in the oblation of the officers.

"Was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels":

Which, according to the calculation of a very learned man, were 7,780 ounces, four drachms, two scruples, and thirty five grains.

This is 16,750 shekels of gold.

This would have been over 11,000 ounces of gold.

Remember, this was an offering to the LORD.

Numbers 31:53 "[For] the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.)"

And which he kept for himself, and did not deliver in with the prey or booty.

Which was brought to Moses and Eleazar, the sum of which was taken by them.

And this seems to confirm what has been hinted, that, as each soldier had taken spoil for himself, so everyone contributed his quota towards this freewill offering to the LORD.

Numbers 31:54 "And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, [for] a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD."

Which they so freely and generously offered.

"And brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation":

And laid it up in some chamber there.

"For a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD":

In remembrance of the signal victory these men obtained.

And of the singular care of divine Providence in protecting them.

That not one was lost in the expedition.

And of their sense of gratitude and thankfulness for the favors granted them.

And to put the children of Israel in mind for their imitation, when favored with mercies from the LORD.

This large amount was probably kept in the tabernacle for the expenses of the tabernacle.

We do not know whether the High Priest and the priests got any of this or not.

The Bible does not say.

Numbers Chapter 31 Continued Questions

1. It is _____ and _____ who will divide the prey.
2. Who could the chief fathers be speaking of?
3. What was the prey?
4. How was the prey to be divided?
5. What is the tribute in verse 28?
6. What were beeves?
7. The tribute from the men of war went to whom?
8. The portion given to the LORD, actually, goes to whom?
9. Who does the tribute of the children of Israel's half go to?
10. How many sheep had they captured?
11. Why did these people have so many animals?
12. How many virgin girls had not been killed?
13. How many of the sheep did the LORD receive in tribute from the soldiers?

14. The tribute of the soldiers, actually, went to whom?
15. How many sheep, beeves, asses, and persons did the congregation receive?
16. How many of each of these did the Levitical tribe receive?
17. How many Israelites were killed in the war?
18. Who brought the oblation for the soldiers to Moses?
19. Who was the offering given to?
20. The gold was, probably, kept in the _____.