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The Spoils of War for the Soldiers
31: 25-41

The spoils of war for the soldiers DIG: What lessons might God be trying to teach Isra'el by asking for one-fiftieth of the spoils of war? Why is the spoil shared equally among those who fought on the front lines and those who stayed at home?

REFLECT: Which do you think brings greater joy to the Lord and the giver: Giving by assessed quotas, or by voluntary donations? Why are both needed to run the congregations of God? How do you share your triumphs with God? What spoils do you give Him?

The Israelites captured a fantastic amount of spoil, a sign of God's faithfulness to the Wilderness Generation and a foretaste of the conquest of Canaan that was yet to come.



ADONAI said to Moshe, "Take a count of **all the spoils, both people and animals, you, Eleazar the high priest and the leaders from each of the twelve tribes."** The task must have been enormous, given the numbers involved. **Divide the spoils into two parts: half for the experienced soldiers who went out to battle, and half for the rest of the people** (**to see link click Fu –**

The Division of the Spoils of War). **From the portion of the soldiers who went out to battle, impose tribute for ADONAI consisting of one-five-hundredth of the persons, cattle, donkeys and sheep; take it from their half and give it to Eleazar as a portion set apart for ADONAI. From the half that goes to the people of Isra'el, you are to take one-fiftieth of the persons, and of the cattle, donkeys and sheep, that is, of all the livestock; and give them to the Levites taking care of the Tabernacle of ADONAI" (31:25-30).** Thus, **the people's** portion of **the spoil** was ten times greater than that of **the soldier's** share – **one fiftieth** compared to **one-five-hundredth**.

The tradition in **Abraham's** day that the tithe of **ten percent** was presented to **the priesthood,** as he did with **the spoils of war** confiscated from the battle of the four kings of Mesopotamia who had attacked the five cities of the plain **(Genesis 14:1-24)**. After presenting the tithe to the regional **high priest Melchizedek** in **Jerusalem**, **he** acted honorably and went beyond the tradition of the day by returning the other ninety percent to the former owners (see the commentary on **Genesis Ed – Melchizedek: King of Salem and a Priest of God Most High**). Later in **Israelite** history **David** likewise ordered the equal distribution of **spoils** of war for the army who fought in the battle and those who remained with the supplies during the battle against **the Amalekites** in the western Negev near **Ziklag** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Cc – David Recovered His Wives**). The offering from the warriors to **the priests** is called a *terumat YHVH*, meaning *the tribute offering to ADONAI*, which was elevated before **the LORD** in a triumphant ceremony before being presented to **the priests** for **their** consumption.

Moshe and Eleazar did as ADONAI had ordered Moshe (31:31). This verse functions as a transitional mark between the giving of the instructions **(verses 25-30)** and the carrying out of each step of the process **(verses 31-40)**, and the conclusion of the accounting and distribution for **the priests (verse 41)** and the conclusion of the accounting and distribution of that which was apportioned to **the Levites** from **the people**. **Moshe**, **Eleazar**, and **the tribal leaders** faithfully followed the instructions from **Ha'Shem** regarding the counting and distribution of **the spoils of war**. Again, the principle of faithful obedience to **the LORD** was the key to success and well-being of the **Israelite** community.[721]

The book of **Numbers** delights in lists, in the numbering of persons and things. Here in this section of the chapter is the command of **ADONAI** to **Moses** to total up **the spoils** of the battle, both human and beast.[722] **The Israelites** captured a fantastic amount of **spoil**, a sign of **God's** faithfulness to the Wilderness Generation

and a foretaste of the conquest of Canaan that was yet to come.[723] **The** total number of **spoils came to 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 young** prepubescent **girls** taken as **captives** (see **Fr – Holy War: ADONAI's mercy**)**.** The numbers were enormous; the victory was staggering **(31:32-35)**. Notice that all the **numbers** in the book of **Numbers** are even numbers with the exception in **3:43** where there were **22,273 first born Israelite men over twenty** (see **As – The Census and the Redemption of the Firstborn**). Because **the census** was taken primarily for military purposes, it would naturally be arranged by **hundreds**, **fifties**, etc. The abundance is shared proportionally with all **the people**, **the priests**, **the Levites**, and the service of **the Tabernacle**. **The half which was the portion of the soldiers who went out to fight, numbered 337,500 sheep, of which ADONAI's tribute was 675; 36,000 cattle, of which ADONAI's tribute was 72; 30,500 donkeys, of which ADONAI's tribute was 61; and 16,000 young** prepubescent **virgins, of whom ADONAI's tribute was 32 (31:36-40).**

Again, the section concludes with a summary statement of complete obedience on the part of **Moses** with regard to the presentation of **the tribute** as a sacred contribution to **the LORD**. **Moshe gave the tribute set apart for ADONAI to Eleazar the high priest, as ADONAI had ordered Moshe (31:41).** This distribution of resources mirrors the distribution of **the Land** and its bounty amount the various tribes of **Isra'el**, which will be one of the central themes of the following chapters, **Numbers 32-35**.[724]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being such a wonderful heavenly **Father**, Faithful and Generous! It is **Your** wisdom and power that helped **the Israelites** be victorious over the Midianites giving **Your** people a fantastic amount of **spoil**, a sign of your generosity and faithfulness. It is such a joy to meditate on how wonderful **You** are and then to exalt **You** in praise! **Your** love is steadfast **(Psalm 63:3)**, and always there! **Your** kingdom is built on **Your** steadfast love and **Your** faithfulness! **Your arm is mighty, Your hand is strong, exalted is Your right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne. Lovingkindness and truth go before You (Psalm 89:13-14).***

*What a comfort in knowing that though with all the turmoil and wars in this world, **You** will be victorious over all evil **(Revelation 19:11-21)** and will set up **an everlasting Kingdom**! **Then the kingdom, power, and greatness of the kingdoms under all heaven will be given to the people of the kedoshim of the Most High. Their kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all***

dominions will serve and obey him (Dani'el 7:27).

*I love you dear **Father** and rejoice in serving **You**. Though there are stresses and problems in following you, yet the problems will be over soon and a life forever in heaven with **You** will be the reward. Though life with its trials sometimes seems hard and painful, this earthly life is but a blink of an eye compared to the forever joy in your eternal home of heaven! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** Praising **You**, loving you and looking forward to living with **You** forever. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*