

Numbers 31 - Vengeance on the Midianites

III. Preparation of the second generation on the plains of Moab to enter Canaan (Num 26:1—36:13)

(2) Preparation for conquest of the land (Num 31:1—36:13)

(A) Victory over Midian (31:1-54)

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Numbers 31

(2) Preparation for conquest of the land (Num 31:1—36:13)

(A) Victory over Midian (31:1-54)

(a) Slaughter of the Midianites (31:1-12)

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

1 Later, the LORD told Moses,

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the sons of Israel; afterward you will be gathered to your people."

2 "Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people."

2 "Be sure to exact vengeance on behalf of the Israelis from the Midianites, after which you'll be taken home to your people."

2 Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy 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.

3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD's vengeance on Midian.

3 So Moses instructed the people, "Muster your men of war to attack the Midianites and deliver the LORD's vengeance against Midian.

3 And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.

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

4 A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war."

4 Send 1,000 men to war from every tribe throughout all of Israel."

4 Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.

- The Lord's last assignment to Moses was carrying out His vengeance on the Midianites

- The reason obviously was Midian's role in Israel's apostate behavior at Baal of Peor (Cf. 25:16-18)

5 So there were selected from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

5 So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

5 So 1,000 men from every tribe—12,000 from the thousands of Israel—were mustered and equipped for war.

5 So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every 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.

6 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 vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand.

6 Moses sent 1,000 men from every tribe to fight against them, along with Eleazar's son Phinehas, in whose hands were the articles of the sanctuary and trumpets to sound battle alarms.

6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

7 So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male.

7 So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male.

7 They fought against the Midianites just as the LORD had commanded Moses, killing every man.

7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

- This was holy war as the presence of Phinehas, the priest, with the 12,000 fighting men attested

- A holy war differed from other kinds in that the Lord Himself led the army (hence the presence of the priest and articles from the sanctuary)

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.

8 They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest of* their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

8 They executed the five kings of Midian, including Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. They also executed Beor's son Balaam with a sword.

8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew 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.

9 The sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods they plundered.

9 After this, the Israelis took captive the Midianite women and children and confiscated as spoils of war all their cattle, livestock, and their goods.

9 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.

10 Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their encampments.

10 Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their camps with fire.

10 They burned every town where they had lived and incinerated all of their encampments.

10 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

- The result was to be total annihilation of all living things and the devoting of all material properties to the Lord (Cf. Deut 20:16-18; Josh 6:15-19)
- This included the 5 Midianite kings and the Prophet Balaam who obviously had returned from Pethor at some time to affiliate with the Midianites
- The towns and camps of Midian were also destroyed and their plunder retained for the Lord
- However, the women and children were spared as were the animals (v9)

11 And they took all the plunder and all the spoils, both of people and of livestock.

11 They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of beast.

11 They took all the booty and plunder, including both humans and animals.

11 And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

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.

12 They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and 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.

12 Then they brought the captives, booty, and plunder to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the entire community of Israel at the camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan River in Jericho.

12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

(b) Slaughter of all non-virgin Midianite women (31:13-18)

13 And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp.

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp.

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the community went out to meet them outside the camp.

13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without 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.

14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.

14 But Moses became livid with anger at the officers of the army, the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds who had returned from servicing in the battle.

14 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.

15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?"

15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?"

15 "Did you keep all the women alive?" Moses asked them.

15 And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

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!

16 Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

16 "Look! These women were the same ones who were counseled by Balaam to cause the Israelis to commit a grievous sin against the LORD at Peor. As a result, that plague infected the LORD's community.

16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

- When Moses met the returning army he was angry when he saw the Midianite survivors

- The Midianite women, he said, should have died because they were directly culpable in Israel's sin at Baal of Peor

17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.

17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately.

17 You are to kill every male child and every woman who has had sexual relations with a man.

17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

18 However, all the girls who have not known a man intimately, keep alive for yourselves.

18 But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves.

18 You are to allow the young women who haven't yet had sexual relations with a man to live for yourselves."

18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

(c) Purification for touching a corpse (31:19-20)

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.

19 And you, camp outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day.

19 "Now you are to stay outside the camp for seven days, after which any of you who has killed a person or touched someone who was killed may purify yourselves on the third day. You and your captives will be pure on the seventh day.

19 And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day.

- All the women except the virgins were then sentenced to death along with all the boys
- This insured the extermination of the Midianites and thus prevented them from ever again seducing Israel to sin
- The virgins were spared because they obviously had had no role in the Baal of Peor incident nor could they by themselves perpetuate the Midianite peoples
- Nonetheless, strict application of the rules of holy war dictated that they too should have been killed (Deut 20:16), so it was only a concession by Moses that allowed them to live

20 And you shall purify for yourselves every garment, every article of leather, every work of goats' *hair*, and every article of wood."

20 You shall purify for yourselves every garment and every article of leather and all the work of goats' *hair*, and all articles of wood."

20 Furthermore, you are to purify every garment—that is, everything made of leather, goat's hair, or containing wood."

20 And purify all your raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood.

(d) Purification of the booty (31:21-24)

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:

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:

21 Eleazar the priest told the soldiers who had gone to battle, "This is the ordinance of the law that the LORD commanded Moses

21 And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses;

22 only the gold and the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead,

22 only the gold and the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin and the lead,

22 concerning anything containing gold, silver, brass, iron, tin, lead,

22 Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, 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.

23 everything that can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean, but it shall be purified with water for impurity. But whatever cannot stand the fire you shall pass through the water.

23 or anything else that can survive a refiner's fire: You are to pass it through fire, after which it will be clean. Then it is to be purified with the water of impurity. Everything that cannot survive a refiner's fire is to be washed in water.

23 Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go 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."

24 And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may enter the camp."

24 Wash your clothes on the seventh day, after which you will be clean. Then you may enter the camp."

24 And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.

(e) Division of the booty (31:25-31)

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
25 Then the LORD told Moses,
25 And the LORD spake unto 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;

26 "You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' *households* of the congregation take a count of the booty that was captured, both of man and of animal;

26 "Take an inventory of the booty that was taken in the battle, both of humans and of animals. Then you, Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the fathers of the community

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:

27 and divide the spoils between the warriors who went to battle and all the congregation.

27 and divide the booty between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation.

27 are to divide the booty between the warriors who went to war and the rest of the community.

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:

- All captives and goods were then to be divided according to a strict formula
- In addition to extensive animal spoils, the soldiers took 16,000 virgin women out of 32,000 and gave 32 over to the Lord (v35,40)
- These 32 women must have functioned somehow as slaves to the priests or tabernacle (Cf. 1 Sam 2:22)

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;

28 Levy a tax for the LORD from the men of war who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the persons and of the cattle and of the donkeys and of the sheep;

28 "After this, you are to exact a tribute for the LORD from the soldiers who went to war, consisting of the tribute earned by one person out of every 500, whether from people, cattle, donkeys, or flocks.

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:

29 take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the LORD.

29 take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the LORD.
29 You are to take half their share and give it to Eleazar the priest as a raised offering to the LORD.
29 Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of 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."

30 From the sons of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of 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 keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

30 Then take half the share of the Israelis, one drawn out of every 50 people, cattle, donkeys, flocks, and from every animal, then give to the descendants of Levi who maintain the service of the LORD's tent."

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.

31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

31 So Moses and Eleazar the priest did what the LORD had commanded Moses.

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

(f) The enumeration of the booty (31:32-47)

32 Now the spoils that remained from the plunder which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep,

32 Now the booty that remained from the spoil which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep,

32 The goods confiscated in excess of the war implements⁹ that the warriors had gathered included 675,000 sheep,

32 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,

33 seventy-two thousand cattle,

33 and 72,000 cattle,

33 72,000 cattle,

33 And threescore and twelve thousand beeves,

34 sixty-one thousand donkeys,
34 and 61,000 donkeys,
34 61,000 donkeys, and
34 And threescore and one thousand asses,

35 and of *captive* people, of the women who had not known a man intimately, in all were thirty-two thousand people.

35 and of human beings, of the women who had not known man intimately, all the persons were 32,000.

35 32,000 women who had not had sexual relations with a man.

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

36 The half, the share of those who went to war, was *as follows*: the number of sheep was 337,500,

36 The half, the portion of those who went out to war, was *as follows*: the number of sheep was 337,500,

36 Now half of the share of those who went to war numbered 337,500 sheep,

36 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:

37 the LORD'S tribute tax of the sheep was 675;

37 and the LORD's levy of the sheep was 675;

37 so the LORD's tribute from the sheep totaled 675.

37 And the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen.

38 the cattle were thirty-six thousand, from which the LORD'S tribute tax was seventy-two;

38 and the cattle were 36,000, from which the LORD's levy was 72;

38 The cattle numbered 36,000, so the LORD's tribute totaled 72.

38 And the beeves were thirty and six thousand; of which the LORD's tribute was threescore and twelve.

Distribution of Booty

The 12,000 that went to the battle had as much for their share as the whole congregation (which were fifty times as many). David later made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel, that, as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff (1 Sam 30:24-25).

39 the donkeys were 30,500, from which the LORD'S tribute tax was sixty-one;
39 and the donkeys were 30,500, from which the LORD's levy was 61;
39 The donkeys numbered 30,500, so the LORD's tribute totaled 61.
39 And the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the LORD's tribute was threescore and one.

40 and the *captive* people were sixteen thousand, from whom the LORD'S tribute tax was thirty-two persons.

40 and the human beings were 16,000, from whom the LORD's levy was 32 persons.

40 The people numbered 16,000, so the LORD's tribute totaled 32 people.

40 And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the LORD's tribute was thirty and 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.

41 Moses gave the levy *which was* the LORD's offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

41 Then Moses gave the tribute, a raised offering to the LORD, to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

41 And Moses gave the tribute, which was the LORD's heave offering, unto Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses.

42 As for the sons of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war—

42 As for the sons of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war—

42 From half of the share of the Israelis that Moses had set aside from the soldiers,

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

43 now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep,

43 now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep,

43 there were 337,500 sheep for the community,

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

44 thirty-six thousand cattle,

44 and 36,000 cattle,

44 36,000 cattle,

44 And thirty and six thousand beeves,

45 30,500 donkeys,

45 and 30,500 donkeys,

45 30,500 donkeys,

45 And thirty thousand asses and five hundred,

46 and the *captive* people were sixteen thousand—

46 and the human beings were 16,000—

46 and 16,000 people.

46 And sixteen thousand persons;)

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.

47 and from the sons of Israel's half, Moses took one drawn out of every fifty, both of man and of animals, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

47 Moses took a portion drawn from every 50 Israelis, including from both human and animals, and gave them to the descendants of Levi who maintained the LORD's tent, just as the LORD had commanded him.

47 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.

(g) The booty offered to the Lord (31:48-54)

48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses,

48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, approached Moses,

48 Then the officers in charge of thousands of soldiers, the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds approached Moses

48 And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto 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.

49 and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a census of men of war who are in our charge, and no man of us is missing.

49 and told him, "Your servants took a count of the soldiers who were under our authority. We didn't miss a single man.

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.

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."

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."

50 We've brought offerings to the LORD from whatever each man found—jewel-encrusted gold, anklets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces—to make atonement for ourselves in the LORD's presence."

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.

- When a count was then made of the soldiers, not one was missing!

- The commanders of the troops were so grateful for this miraculous deliverance that they brought a freewill offering of gold ornaments to the Lord

- They did this to make atonement, which likely means they recognized that the lack of casualties was an act of divine grace beyond anything they deserved

51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of crafted articles.

51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of wrought articles.

51 Then Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them and everything that was fashioned into jewels.

51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels.

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.

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

52 The gold for the raised offering that they brought to the LORD totaled 16,750 shekels,

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.

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

53 The men of war had taken booty, every man for himself.

53 because every soldier had confiscated war booty for his own use.

53 (For the men of war had taken spoil, 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.

54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD.

54 Moses and Eleazar took the gold from the captains of thousands and hundreds and brought it to the Tent of Meeting, to serve as a memorial to the Israelis in the LORD's presence.

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.