Exodus 32:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

Analysis

Joshua, who had waited below the cloud's glory zone (Ex 24:13), heard קוֹל הָעָם בְּרֵעֹה (qol ha'am bere'oh, the sound of the people in their shouting) and misidentified it as military combat. His use of מִלְחָמָה (milchamah, war) shows he expected external enemies. Moses' response will correct this—the danger was internal apostasy, more deadly than any military threat. Joshua's loyal presence contrasts with Aaron's compromise; he remained close to God's presence rather than descending to the people.

Historical Context

Joshua, Moses' minister and eventual successor, had accompanied Moses partway up Sinai (Ex 24:13) and apparently waited there during the 40 days. His confusion shows how spiritual compromise can sound like zealous activity.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between godly zeal and fleshly religious fervor?
2. What spiritual 'battles' are actually internal compromises disguised as external threats?

Interlinear Text

בְּרֵעֹה	הָעָם	קוֹל	אֶת	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	וַיִּשְׁמַע
as they shouted	of the people	There is a noise	H853	And when Joshua	heard
H7452	H5971	H6963		H3091	H8085

בָּמַּחֲנֶה:	מִלְחָמָה	קוֹל	מֹשֶׁה	אֶל	וַיֹּאמֶר
in the camp	of war	There is a noise	unto Moses	H413	he said
H4264	H4421	H6963	H4872		H559

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 24:13 (References Moses): And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

Exodus 17:9 (References Moses): And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.