

Judges 20:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

Analysis

The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah—Benjamin responds to Israel's demands not with compliance but with military mobilization. They rally from their scattered towns (עָרִים, arim) to Gibeah, the site of the crime, effectively declaring the entire tribe stands with the perpetrators. **To go out to battle against the children of Israel** (לִצְאת לַמִּלְחָמָה) (לִצְאת לַמִּלְחָמָה, latzet lamilchamah im-benei yisra'el)—they initiate offensive warfare 'against' their brother tribes.

Benjamin's decision is catastrophic. Rather than surrendering a handful of criminals from one city, they choose civil war, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and their tribe's near-extinction. Pride and tribal loyalty override wisdom. This illustrates how doubling down on defending evil compounds guilt exponentially. The rational response—'Yes, those men committed horrific crimes and deserve death'—is rejected in favor of irrational tribal defense. Benjamin's military courage becomes moral cowardice. Sometimes the bravest act is not fighting but admitting wrong and seeking reconciliation. Benjamin's mobilization shows that skill in warfare doesn't equate to wisdom in righteousness. Their elite fighters (v. 16) will prove militarily impressive but morally bankrupt. The verse warns that going to battle 'against' brothers should be the last resort after all attempts at peace are exhausted, not the first response when confronted with uncomfortable truth.

Historical Context

Benjamin's tribal pride had deep roots. They descended from Jacob's beloved youngest son (Genesis 35:18), and their territory, though small, held strategic importance including the approaches to Jerusalem. Their fierce warrior reputation (Genesis 49:27 calls Benjamin a 'ravenous wolf') made them confident despite being vastly outnumbered. This confidence, combined with tribal solidarity, overrode prudent assessment of their position.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. When does doubling down in defense of wrong compound your guilt exponentially?
2. How does pride masquerading as loyalty prevent you from admitting fault and seeking reconciliation?
3. What would it mean to show moral courage by surrendering your position rather than fighting to defend it?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲסָפוּ gathered themselves together H622	בְּנֵי י But the children H1121	בְּנֵימִן of Benjamin H1144	מִן H4480	הָעָרִים out of the cities H5892	
הַגִּבְעָה unto Gibeah H1390	לָצֵאת to go out H3318	לְמִלְחָמָה to battle H4421	עַם H5973	בְּנֵי י But the children H1121	יִשְׂרָאֵל: of Israel H3478

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